

**BENIN CITY**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has declared that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu remains firmly committed to Nigeria's future, saying that the Federal Government's reforms are already unlocking resources for development across the country.

# Tinubu believes in Nigeria's future —Okpebholo

## ● As Edo Gov rebuilds Ekpoma shops, compensates fire victims

Okpebholo made the remarks in Ekpoma and Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area, during the inauguration of ward and local government coordinators of the Renewed Hope Ambassadors,

alongside a defection rally held at Eguare Public Field, Irrua.

The event witnessed the formal defection of members of a major opposition political party into the All Progressives Congress (APC), including promi-

nent politicians such as Senator Clifford Odiya, Hon. Joe Edionwele, Chief Clifford (popularly known as Cliff Sandra), Mrs Ihenyenyen, and other members from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), as well as entrants from

the Labour Party (LP).

According to the governor, the removal of fuel subsidy by President Tinubu, described as a difficult, but necessary decision avoided by past administrations has freed up funds now

being channelled into development projects nationwide.

"That is the money we are using to work all over Nigeria today," he said, adding that the president's reforms demonstrate long-term confidence in

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...that the people may know

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**Okpebholo vows lasting legacy, tours Edo projects with Idris Abdulkareem**

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# Okpebholo releases N1bn, commences gratuity payments for Edo retirees

IDAHOSA MUSA

**BENIN CITY**

Governor Monday Okpebholo has approved the release of N1 billion for the payment of gratuities to retired teachers and local government workers in Edo State, with disbursement commencing on Monday.

The exercise primarily targets those who retired in 2012, while also accommodating some pensioners from 2009 to 2011 who had remained unpaid for years.

The long-awaited payments

triggered emotional scenes at collection centres, as several elderly and frail retirees broke down in tears upon receiving their cheques after prolonged delays.

Further findings indicated that some critically ill retirees from 2013 were also included in the payment process on compassionate grounds.

Presenting the cheques, Chairman of the Local Government Staff Pension Bureau, Hon. Kabiru Adjoto, said the intervention reflects the administration's commitment to clearing outstanding gratuities

and improving retirees' welfare.

He disclosed that the governor has already approved another N1 billion for the next phase, which will cover those who retired in 2013, adding that the current disbursement is part of a sustained effort to clear accumulated arrears.

"The Governor considers it unfortunate that gratuities were allowed to pile up over the years. He has assured that once this tranche is completed, another N1 billion will be released. This will be a continuous exercise," Adjoto said.

"We discovered that some retirees between 2009 and 2011 had not been paid. We brought them into the process and cleared the backlog. Before the end of this week, another N1 billion will be released."

Adjoto stressed that the administration is determined to reposition Edo State as a benchmark for prompt pension administration in Nigeria.

"The Governor is serious about gratuity payments. He is not comfortable with the backlog. This government is willing and determined to ensure that

every retiree gets his or her due. I appeal for patience as the process continues," he added.

He also warned pensioners against fraud, stressing that gratuity collection is free of charge.

"It is criminal to pay money to collect your cheque. Do not give anyone money to influence your payment. There is no percentage to be paid. Anyone

who demands even one percent should be reported to the Pension Bureau," he cautioned.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), Samuel Okhuelegbe, commended the state government for the intervention and urged sustained efforts to fully address the welfare of pensioners in the state.

## Ghost workers scandal: UPTH suspends salaries of 1,000 staff

### ● Uncovers payroll fraud

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

**PORT HARCOURT**

The University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH) has suspended the salaries of 1,000 workers following the discovery of major irregularities in its payroll system after a comprehensive staff audit exercise.

The Chief Medical Director, Prof. Chituru Orluwene, disclosed this while briefing journalists to mark his first 100 days in office, revealing that the verification exercise exposed a wide gap between staff on the payroll and those physically present in the hospital.

According to him, the hospital's payroll contained about 4,000 names, but only about 2,000 workers were physically verified as active staff on the ground.

He explained that the audit was initiated shortly after he assumed office as the 8th Chief Medical Director, following concerns over

discrepancies in staff records and operational efficiency.

"When we resumed, we found 4,000 staff on the payroll, but 2,000 of them were on the ground. Following this, we initiated a verification exercise," he said.

Prof. Orluwene confirmed that, as part of the ongoing clean-up, salaries of 1,000 workers had been stopped, while investigations into remaining cases were ongoing.

He added that the report from the exercise would be forwarded to the Federal Government for further action, including possible recruitment to address genuine manpower needs in the hospital.

The CMD also said the reforms were aimed at blocking revenue leakages in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, noting that hospital and mortuary charges had been re-

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**RECEPTION OF DECAMPEES:**

R-L: Prince Odianosen Okojie, Member representing Esan North East/Esan S'East Federal Constituency, in the House of Representatives; Hon. Sam Abbulimen Oboh, Chairman, Edo State Polytechnic (Usen) Governing Council; Secretary to the Edo State Government, Musa Ikhilor, Esq.; Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo; Clifford Odiya; and APC Edo Central leader, Gen. Cecil Esekhaigbe (rtd), among others, during the reception of decampees into the All Progressives Congress (APC) at Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State.

**ADC crisis: Court declines Mark leadership's request, adjourns Gombe suit indefinitely** —Pg 2

**Import prices rise slightly as trade indices edge up in Q4 2025** —NBS —Pg 7

**Spain approves plan to give around 500,000 undocumented migrants legal status** —Pg 8

**Osimhen emerges as top target as Yamal makes preference clear** —Pg 14

# Idahosa family stages music tribute for matriarch at 95

BERNADETTE IDALU

## BENIN CITY

In a moving blend of culture, music and communal solidarity, the family of Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, is set to host a grand music fiesta in honour of their late matriarch, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa, as part of activities marking her final rites.

The event, initiated by the Edo State chapter of the Performing Musicians Employers Association of Nigeria (PMAN), will see a vibrant musical showcase take centre stage at the Idahosa residence from May 5, 2026—three days ahead of the burial ceremonies scheduled for May 8 to 10.

Receiving the proposal on behalf of the family on Tuesday, April 14, Idahosa expressed appreciation to the musicians' body, led by its State Governor, Mrs. Esther Edokpayi Ebagua, for conceiving what he described as a 'fitting tribute' to a woman who cherished music and dance throughout her lifetime.

He assured the association of the family's full support, pledging to provide all necessary technical assistance for the

successful installation of a performance stage at the residence.

According to him, the celebration would not only honour his mother's memory, but also reflect the rich cultural diversity of Edo State.

"You said by May 5, you want to assemble a stage here where all PMAN groups will perform. With the arrangements in place, my family will graciously accept that.

"Whatever support you need, let me know so we can set it up. My mum loved music deeply; even in spirit, I believe she would rise and dance with you," he said.

The deputy governor noted that there could be no more meaningful way to celebrate the life of the late nonagenarian than through music that cuts across the languages and traditions of Edo's three senatorial districts.

He described the pre-burial fiesta as a lively prelude to the final rites of a woman he said lived a virtuous and impactful life.

PMAN disclosed that featured artistes would perform pro bono as a mark of respect for the deceased, who was widely known for her love of dancing and traditional rhythms.

Even ahead of the formal festivities, the Idahosa residence

has become become a hub of tribute and remembrance.

The atmosphere came alive with traditional music as women of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ovia North East, led by Princess Sonata Ewaka, were in the home with songs and dances, accompanied by the rhythmic sounds of the sekere percussion instrument—an instrument the late matriarch was particularly fond of.

The group said their performance was a symbolic connection to the departed, expressing belief that she was "watching and smiling" as traditional dirges

were rendered in her honour.

Also present were APC women leaders from Edo South Senatorial District and representatives from the seven local government areas, led by Mrs. Vivian Inneh, who offered prayers and condolences to the grieving family.

The Nigerian Union of Pensioners, led by its State Chairman, Comrade Samuel Okhueleigbe, joined in the condolence visit, using the occasion to commend the deputy governor for fulfilling a pledge previously made to the union.

Traditional rulers and com-

munity leaders equally paid homage.

The Enogie of Idogbo, Edo-Osarobo, and the Ohen of Ikpe Community, Amadin Agbonlahor, both offered prayers for the repose of the deceased and comfort for the bereaved.

Community elders, including Odionwere Ekhaton Iyoha, Odionwere Monday Omoruyi and Odionwere Charles Ekhaton Idahosa, were also present to pay their last respects, while a group of elderly widows from Iguobazuwa drew emotional attention as they were warmly received and embraced by

members of the household.

Several institutional groups also turned out in solidarity, including the Edo State House of Assembly Service Commission led by Hon. Ezechi Igbas; Heads of Local Government Administration and Directors of Finance and Accounts under the leadership of Kensington Osifo; former Edo Assembly Speaker, Hon. Kabiru Adjoto; alumni of the 1998 set of St. Paul Memorial Secondary School led by Eki Osawaru; and operatives of the Edo State Security Corps, Ovia South West Command, led by Osarieme Ojo.

## ADC crisis: Court declines Mark leadership's request, adjourns Gombe suit indefinitely

### ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday declined an application by the Senator David Mark-led leadership of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) seeking the hearing of all pending motions, including the substantive suit, in the case filed by Nafiu Bala Gombe.

Justice Emeka Nwite, ruling on Gombe's request for an indefinite adjournment to await the Supreme Court's decision on Mark's appeal, held that proceeding with the matter while the court's jurisdiction is under challenge would amount to "wrestling jurisdiction" with the apex court.

Although both parties were not in dispute over the facts of the case, the judge noted that "the facts are glaring that an appeal has been entered" at the Supreme Court.

He referenced reliefs two and three in the motion filed by Mark before the apex court, where he sought an order staying execution of the Court of Appeal judgment and striking out the appellate court's deci-

sion delivered on March 12.

"It is trite law that where a court lacks jurisdiction to entertain a suit, no matter how beautifully the judgment is delivered, it will be a nullity," Justice Nwite said, citing a Supreme Court precedent.

"I am of the view, and I so hold, that it will not serve any purpose if the jurisdiction of this court is being challenged at the Supreme Court and this court cannot await that decision," he added.

The judge also disagreed with the defence's argument that an interlocutory appeal could not operate as a stay of proceedings before the lower court.

"The interlocutory appeal may likely dispose of the case before this court. The most honourable thing to do is to await the decision of the Supreme Court," he ruled.

Justice Nwite further observed that while the defence relied on the Court of Appeal's directive for accelerated hearing, they simultaneously sought to vacate that same order at the Supreme Court, describing the position as approving and reprobating.

## Ghost workers scandal: UPTH suspends...

### «CONTINUED FROM PG 1

viewed downward.

He announced the introduction of an in-patient feeding scheme, under which patients would be charged ₦5,000 daily for three-square meals.

On sanitation, Orluwene said the hospital had tackled a severe mosquito infestation

traced to broken underground pipes and blocked soakaway systems, which previously required the evacuation of about 40 truckloads of waste.

He said the intervention had significantly improved hygiene conditions within the facility, stressing that his administration is focused on practical reforms rather than rhetoric.



### COMPENSATION CHEQUES DISPLAY:

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (middle) with victims of the POWA market fire displaying their cheques after receiving compensation, courtesy of Governor Okpebholo.

## Kogi youths protest alleged plot against INEC Chairman, reject 'Smear Campaign'

CAROLINE AMEH

### LOKOJA

Hundreds of youths in Aiyetoro Gbade, Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State have staged a protest against what they described as politically motivated attempts to undermine the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The protesters, drawn from youth and civil society groups, marched through major streets of the community in support of the commission's independence

and solidarity with its chairman, Prof. Joash Ojo Amupitan, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria.

Carrying placards with inscriptions such as "Enemies of Fairness, Beware!" and "Fair Elections Start with Amupitan," the demonstrators rejected allegations circulating on social media, describing them as coordinated efforts to discredit the electoral system.

The protest procession, which featured participants on motorcycles and on foot, attracted widespread attention as residents watched while demonstrators chanted solidarity

songs and called for the protection of democratic institutions.

Speaking during the protest, a youth leader, Segun, said any attempt to tarnish the chairman's image or remove him unjustly would be resisted.

"We are here to defend the sanctity of INEC. Prof. Amupitan is a man of integrity. Any attempt to malign him is an attack on democracy," he said.

The protest comes amid national debates over alleged political affiliations of the INEC chairman, allegations the youths dismissed as "sponsored propaganda."

INEC, however, has rejected calls for his removal, describing such demands as unconstitutional and a threat to its independence.

In a statement by its Chief Press Secretary, Adedayo Oke-tola, the commission said its leadership is guided by constitutional provisions, particularly Section 157 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which outlines procedures for appointment and removal.

The commission maintained that its actions, including compliance with court rulings and decisions affecting political parties, are rooted in the rule of law and aimed at safeguarding Nigeria's democratic process.

## Tinubu believes in Nigeria's...

### «CONTINUED FROM PG 1

the country's prosperity.

Okpebholo also said he recently hosted a critic of the policy and took him round ongoing projects in Edo State, noting that the individual was convinced after seeing how the resources are being utilised.

He added that more independent observers, including Arise Television's Reuben Abati, would be invited to assess projects in the state.

Reaffirming Edo's political alignment with the presidency, the governor declared that the

state is prepared to deliver 2.7 million votes in support of President Tinubu's re-election bid.

Meanwhile, in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area, the governor fulfilled his earlier promise to victims of the January unrest by handing over newly rebuilt Police Officers' Wives Association (POWA) shops that were destroyed during the incident.

He also presented cheques of ₦8 million each to affected shop owners as financial support to help them rebuild their businesses and livelihoods.

Recalling the January incident, Okpebholo said he was alerted

around 3 a.m. and immediately travelled from Abuja at about 4 a.m. to assess the situation, describing the destruction as the work of "evil men" who targeted shops, billboards, and private property in a bid to disrupt peace.

He said he visited the palace of the Enogie upon arrival to obtain first-hand information, expressing shock at the scale of damage, but noted that the rebuilding now marks a return to normalcy and economic recovery in the area.

The governor also disclosed that President Tinubu closely followed the Ekpoma crisis via social media, underscoring the presidency's attention to devel-

opments across the country.

Dignitaries at the event included the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilior (SAN); Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku; members of the State House of Assembly; party leaders; and other stakeholders.

The inauguration of the Renewed Hope Ambassadors and the defection exercise were coordinated by the Edo State APC Deputy Chairman and State Coordinator of the Renewed Hope Ambassadors, Sylvester Aigboboh, alongside lawmakers at the National Assembly and other party leaders.

# Okpebholo vows lasting legacy, tours Edo projects with Idris Abdulkareem

## ● Gets accolade from music maestro

RICHARD EWEKA

**BENIN CITY**

The Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has reiterated his determination to leave

the state better than he met it, as he undertook an inspection tour of ongoing and completed projects across Edo Central in the company of popular Nigerian singer, rapper and Jagajaga crooner, Eedris Turayo

Abdulkareem Ajenifuja, popularly known as Eedris Abdulkareem

Speaking during the tour, the governor stressed that his administration remains firmly committed to delivering meas-

urable progress in critical sectors such as infrastructure, education and healthcare, attributing the pace of development to improved federal allocations under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Okpebholo said the enthusiastic turnout of residents during

the inspection reflected growing public confidence in his government, noting that visible development projects across the state were beginning to yield tangible results in the lives of the people.

He expressed appreciation to Abdulkareem for the visit, using the occasion to reaffirm his political confidence ahead of future electoral contests.

"When I say we will deliver 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu, people doubt it. But today, you have seen for yourself how people are coming out because of what we are doing," the governor said.

Highlighting key interventions, he pointed to ongoing investments in roads, schools and healthcare facilities as evidence of prudent utilisation of federal allocations, insisting that governance must be anchored on projects that directly impact citizens.

"These roads are in Edo State. We must work for Edo people. You have gone round schools, roads, hospitals. These are the things our people want to see, and that is exactly what we are doing," he added.

Earlier, Abdulkareem explained that his visit was aimed at independently verifying reports of development in the state, expressing satisfaction with what he described as visible progress across Edo Central and other parts of the state.

"I came to see for myself if Edo is truly working, and I must say the governor has done a lot. I have gone round and seen several projects. In the next one

or two years, the achievements will be even more evident," the artiste said, while urging Edo indigenes in the diaspora to return home and witness the transformation firsthand.

Also speaking, the Edo State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, described the governor as a responsive and people-oriented leader, noting that the administration has consistently demonstrated a willingness to address public concerns promptly.

Afegbua added that the scale and quality of projects being executed across the state underscored the administration's development agenda, expressing optimism that further gains would be recorded as the inspection exercise extends to Edo South.

In Edo South Senatorial District, where Prince Afegbua led him on a tour round some legacy projects executed by Governor Okpebholo, Eedris Abdulkareem scored Governor Okpebholo high on infrastructural development.

The Nigerian singer and rapper said he had just come into Edo State from Abia State, where he had spent two months shooting a musical documentary for Governor Alex Otti, noting that he would be returning to Edo State to spend three weeks touring projects, which he intends to capture and portray in a musical video to be released later.

He said, "I sang about Jagajaga about 25 years ago, but today, former President Olusegun Obasanjo is a campaigner of Jagajaga."

**INSPECTION OF PROJECTS:**

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (middle), flanked by the State Commissioner for Communication and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua (left) and the music maestro, Eedris Abdulkareem, during inspection of projects executed by the state government.

## Police foil dawn robbery in Delta, arrest suspect, recover arms

VICTOR AJUNWA

**AGBOR**

A suspected armed robbery operation was foiled in the early hours of the weekend in Agbor, Delta State, after a swift, intelligence-driven response by the police disrupted an eight-man gang attempting to break into a residential compound.

The incident, which occurred at about 4:47 a.m. at Full Current Compound in Alihame, threw residents into panic as the armed gang al-

legedly tried to force their way into the premises.

A distress call from a resident prompted an immediate response from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Agbor Division, who mobilised the Anti-Crime Patrol team to the scene, according to the Police Public Relations Officer, SP Bright Edafe.

Edafe disclosed that upon arrival, one of the suspects, identified as 41-year-old Emeke Ernest from Ukpo in Anambra State, had already been overpowered by vigilant residents after a struggle.

The suspect, who sustained injuries during the altercation, was taken into custody and rushed to the General Hospital in Agbor, where he is currently receiving treatment.

A search of the scene led to the recovery of one live cartridge from the suspect, while two expended cartridges, a battle axe, a red cloth believed to have been used as a face mask, and a mobile phone were also retrieved.

In a follow-up operation on Monday based on the suspect's confession, police operatives recovered a locally fabricated single-barrel shotgun hidden near the scene.

The Commissioner of Police

in Delta State, CP Yemi Oyeniyi, commended the officers and residents for their coordinated efforts in foiling the operation.

He said the prompt action of the DPO and the vigilance of residents were instrumental in preventing what could have been a major criminal attack.

The police boss reassured residents of the command's commitment to protecting lives and property, urging the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities.

Investigations are ongoing, while efforts have been intensified to apprehend other members of the gang who fled the scene.

## Idahosa hails Okpebholo's support as Edo leaders, groups pay condolence visits over mother's death

BERNADETTE IDALU

**BENIN CITY**

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa has described Governor Monday Okpebholo as an "understanding boss and senior brother," citing his support and compassion following the death of his mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa.

Idahosa made the remark while receiving the Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, alongside principal officers of the 8th Assembly, during a condolence visit to his family residence.

He disclosed that the governor had been in constant touch,

calling daily to check on his wellbeing and insisting that he observe a minimum of seven working days off duty to mourn.

"I was supposed to resume work today, but he said no, that I must take time off while they handle official duties and allow me receive guests.

"He has also been fully involved in ongoing preparations," Idahosa said, urging the lawmakers to convey his appreciation to the governor.

The deputy governor, who thanked the legislators for their solidarity, gave a brief account of his late mother's life, describing her as impactful, kind-hearted, generous, and deeply supportive.

He noted that despite Nigeria's life expectancy being put at about 55 years, his mother lived to the age of 95, raising six children — five boys and one girl — all of whom are doing well.

While emphasising that the family was in a celebratory mood rather than mourning, Idahosa said his mother lived a fulfilled life marked by compassion and faith.

"If there is an afterlife, I would still wish she remains my mother. She was my backbone, confidant, and prayer partner," he added.

The condolence visit drew a large turnout of political leaders, government officials, and community groups.

Leading a delegation from Ovia North East Local Government Area, the council chairman, Hon. Igbinaken Omoruyi, described the late matriarch as a woman of prayer and virtue whose life should be emulated.

Similarly, the Chairman of Ovia South West Local Government Area, Hon. Nosakhare Edobor, said her passing was painful but noted that she lived a fulfilled life and left behind a legacy through her son's leadership.

The Edo Women Vanguard, led by its Director General, Hon. Sweet Oghogho, also paid tribute, recalling the deceased's hospitality, cheerfulness, and active lifestyle even in old age.

## Edo Police arrest 5 officers, 3 civilians over abduction, POS extortion ring

MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

**BENIN CITY**

The Edo State Police Command has arrested five of its personnel and three civilians over their alleged involvement in a criminal syndicate specialising in abduction and extortion of residents in Benin City.

The suspects included a dismissed police corporal, a Point of Sale (POS) operator, and two commercial minibus drivers, who were reportedly operating along the Teboga axis off Aduwawa.

Police said the group posed as law enforcement officers, unlawfully stopping unsuspecting victims, forcefully conveying them around the city, and coercing them into withdrawing money through POS operators.

The Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, disclosed that the arrests followed a series of public complaints and intelligence-led operations ordered by the Commissioner of Police, CP Monday Agbonika.

She explained that investiga-

tions revealed the suspects operated a well-organised network, using police uniforms and accoutrements to deceive victims.

Those arrested were identified as Goodluck Jaja (POS operator), ASP Bonny Paul Onajite, Inspector Ehubarieme Wisdom, Inspector Arebame God's Power, Corporal Mor-di Philip, Destiny Emmanuel (dismissed corporal), Corporal Okon Elvis, Samuel Nicholas (minibus driver), and Etim Bright (minibus driver).

Ikoedem said the serving officers are currently undergoing internal disciplinary procedures, including orderly room trials, while all suspects will be charged to court upon conclusion of investigations.

The command urged members of the public to report similar incidents through its Complaint Response Unit and Public Complaints Bureau hotlines.

Police authorities reiterated their commitment to accountability and warned that misconduct within the force would not be tolerated.

## NEWS

## NASS c'ttee inspects NDDC projects in C'River, commends Otu

## CALABAR

The National Assembly Committee on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) on Tuesday undertook an inspection tour of ongoing projects in Cross River State, evaluating performance, transparency and impact across project sites.

During the exercise, the committee assessed several NDDC interventions aimed at improving infrastructure and development outcomes in the state.

Speaking during a meeting with Governor Bassey Otu,

leader of the delegation, Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong, said the visit aligned with the committee's constitutional mandate of ensuring accountability in project execution.

He added that the exercise also reflected President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which emphasises effective and sustainable development interventions across the country.

Ekpenyong commended the Otu-led administration for implementing visible projects impacting lives positively across the state.

"I am confident of improved

outcomes in Cross River. We shall continue to collaborate with the state to accelerate project delivery for the benefit of the people," he said.

In his response, Governor Otu thanked the lawmakers for their commitment to quality oversight and accountability in public projects.

"You are doing very well.

Your commitment to national development through effective legislative oversight of intervention programmes is commendable," he said.

The governor said the visit would strengthen collaboration between the state and the Federal Government, while improving governance outcomes and service delivery.

He acknowledged the impact of Federal Government intervention projects, calling for sustained implementation to enhance community welfare.

"I emphasise collective responsibility in governance and the need for synergy among stakeholders to achieve meaningful and measurable development," he added.

The Managing Director of the NDDC, Mr Samuel Ogbuku, said the commission was currently executing about 27km of roads across Cross River State.

He disclosed that 10.7km had already been completed, attributing the progress to strong collaboration between the commission and the state government.

## Benin passport centre not scrapped, no extortion —Investigation

## BENIN CITY

Claims that the Benin City passport production centre of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) has been scrapped have been dismissed as false, with sources confirming that operations remain intact at the command headquarters in Benin City.

Sources who spoke following an independent visit by a team of journalists to the Edo State Command of NIS said that the facility is fully operational and continues to process international passports without disruption.

They also refuted allegations of extortion of applicants, noting that no such practices were observed during the assessment.

According to the sources, passport processing in the command is being carried out in a transparent, orderly and

professional manner, in strict compliance with established procedures and extant regulations of the Service.

The sources described the report alleging the scrapping of the centre and extortion of applicants as misleading and baseless, insisting that it does not reflect the true situation within the Edo State Command.

They added that the publication appeared to be a deliberate attempt to misinform the public and discredit officers of the Service in the state.

On the claim that the passport production centre had been scrapped, the sources maintained that the facility remains functional and that no applicant has been left stranded, contrary to the allegations contained in the report.

They, however, acknowledged ongoing reforms by the Federal Government, includ-



## A CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Members of Edo State House of Assembly: L-R: Hon. Donald Okogbe (Akoko Edo II); Hon. Sunny Ojizeze (Esan South East); Hon. Eugene Inegbeboh (Igueben); Hon. Kingsley Ugabi (Etsako East); Speaker, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku (Owan West); Deputy Governor of Edo State, Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Hon. Osamwonyi Atu (Orhionmwon I); Hon. Jonathan Ibhama (Esan West); Hon. Charity Aguobaru (Ovia North East I); and Hon. Sunday Aghedo (Ovia South West), during a condolence visit to the Deputy Governor in Benin City over the demise of his mother.

## Egor APC endorses hotelier for Edo Assembly seat

## BENIN CITY

Ward 9 of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State has endorsed a hotelier and Chairman of Play-house Hotels Limited, Chief Osahon John Airhunmwunde, as its preferred candidate for the Edo State House of Assembly election in 2027.

The endorsement was announced by the Ward Chairman, Hon. Igbiniyiesu, during the official launch of Airhunmwunde's political ambition at the Egor State Constituency office in the presence of party leaders.

Party leaders commended Airhunmwunde for his contributions to development in Egor Local Government Area, noting that his candidacy would strengthen legislative capacity and accelerate grassroots development.

In his remarks, Airhunmwunde thanked party leaders for their support, saying his ambition was driven by perceived gaps in current representation.

He said he had used his personal resources and goodwill to support community development initiatives across Egor.

He listed some of his interventions to include the donation of two Sienna vehicles to the Okhoro Police Station to strengthen security, provision of a 500KVA transformer to improve electricity supply, and the employment of over 200 youths to reduce crime and social unrest.

He also said he had made efforts to ensure Egor receives adequate attention under the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Airhunmwunde promised to attract more development projects if given the party's ticket, including a road linkage between Okhoro and Uteh communities to ease traffic congestion in Benin City.

He said his agenda aligns with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and Governor Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda, which he described as focused on development and transformation.

## LAFIA

A member representing Lafia Central Constituency in the Nasarawa State House of Assembly, Mr Solomon Akwashiki, has cautioned youths against violence and destruction of campaign materials ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Akwashiki gave the warning on Tuesday in Lafia while hosting stakeholders from Angwan Rere community in Lafia Local Government Area.

He urged youths to shun all forms of violence in the interest of peace and sustainable devel-

opment.

The warning followed an incident in which some youths from Angwan Rere allegedly burnt his campaign billboard on April 5 ahead of the 2027 Lafia/Obi Federal Constituency election.

Reacting, Akwashiki said the act would only strengthen his resolve to do more for his constituency.

He expressed appreciation to the District Head of Lafia North, Alhaji Musa Abubakar, and other stakeholders who visited and apologised on behalf of those involved.

"I am happy that no life was lost during the incident. It is

ungodly to destroy someone's billboard.

"Whatever we do on earth, we must remember that we will give account before God Almighty.

"I have forgiven all those involved in the burning of my campaign billboard," he said.

The lawmaker noted that he had executed several projects across his constituency and called for continued support to do more.

He also pledged sustained empowerment for youths and women to promote self-reliance and development.

Earlier, the District Head, Alhaji Abubakar, apologised over the incident, describing it

as unfortunate.

"We are here to apologise for the unfortunate incident in my community where some youths burnt your campaign billboard.

"It is not a good act. If not that it is wrong to curse, I would have cursed those responsible," he said.

He commended Akwashiki for his developmental efforts and assured him of continued support.

Also speaking, the community youth leader, Mr Shugaba Saleh, condemned the act, describing it as "unfortunate and the handiwork of the devil."

He assured the lawmaker of the community's loyalty and support.

## House of Reps Minority Whip resigns from PDP

## GOMBE

The Minority Whip of the House of Representatives, Ali Isa, has resigned from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), citing internal challenges and what he described as the hijacking of the party by undemocratic forces.

In a resignation letter dated April 14, and addressed to the Chairman of Kindiyoy Ward

in Cham, Balanga Local Government Area of Gombe State, the lawmaker said his decision takes immediate effect.

The letter, which was signed by the Minority Whip and made available to newsmen in Gombe, stated that his exit followed careful consideration and wide consultations with key stakeholders.

According to him, the decision is driven by concerns over the direction of the party,

alleging that its structure had been taken over in a manner inconsistent with its founding principles, leading to factional leadership.

He explained that after consulting with his family, political associates, and supporters, he concluded that his political future, as well as that of his constituents, would be better served outside the PDP.

The lawmaker further stated that his constituents deserve a

political platform that guarantees their interests and long-term aspirations.

He, expressed appreciation to the PDP leadership and members for the opportunity given to him to serve, noting that he remains grateful for the platform that enabled his election into the National Assembly.

Isa represents Balanga/Billiri Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives.

# Army Chief seeks enhanced capacity for seamless inter-agency operations

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Waidi Shaibu, has called for enhanced training, professionalism and coordination in protocol and liaison duties to strengthen joint and multi-agency operations.

Shaibu made the call at the opening of the Fourth Capacity Building Workshop on Protocol and Liaison Duties organised by the Army Headquarters Department of Special Services and Programmes on Tuesday in Abuja.

He was represented by the

Chief of Administration (Army), Maj.-Gen. Isa Abdullahi.

The COAS said effective protocol management had become critical in modern military engagements involving sister services, security agencies and international partners.

He stressed that Nigeria's expanding military diplomacy and inter-agency engagements required improved competence in protocol administration.

"The chosen theme is apt as it emphasises the pivotal role of protocol and liaison duties in today's operating environment.

"These skill sets are invaluable in our contemporary world as they constantly shape how we are perceived as an Army," he said.

Shaibu said continuous capacity development was necessary to ensure seamless coordination in joint and multi-agency environments.

He noted that the Army's involvement in bilateral and multinational engagements made professional protocol handling indispensable.

"Increased military-to-military bilateral contacts and engagements with friendly allies all over the world call for better understanding of protocol functions," he said.

The COAS commended the Department of Special Services and Programmes for organising the workshop, describing it as timely and strategic.

He also appreciated invited diplomats and resource persons for contributing to the training effort.

Shaibu reaffirmed the Army's commitment to professionalism and synergy with sister services in tackling security chal-

lenges across the country.

He said the initiative aligned with his command philosophy aimed at transforming the Nigerian Army into a more adaptable, combat-ready and resilient force.

Earlier, the Chief of Special Services and Programmes (Army), Maj.-Gen. Aminu Garba, said the workshop was designed to enhance efficiency in protocol and liaison management across the Armed Forces and security agencies.

Garba said the training had become necessary due to the increasing complexity of joint operations and international engagements.

He said the Department remained committed to improving professionalism in ceremonial, diplomatic and inter-agency coordination functions.



## CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (3rd left); his Deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa with his wife, Ambassador Osaretin (left); Edo State All Progressives Congress (APC) Secretary, Lawrence Okah (3rd right); Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Adams Oshiomhole (2nd right) and State APC Chairman, Jarette Tenebe, during a condolence visit to the Deputy Governor over the death of his mother recently.

# 12yrs after Chibok abduction, MMF decries waning attention

LAGOS

Twelve years after the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, concerns have resurfaced over accountability and dwindling global attention.

The girls were abducted on April 14, 2014, by Boko Haram insurgents, sparking global outrage and the "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign.

The Murtala Muhammed Foundation (MMF), in a statement marking the anniversary on Tuesday, said 89 of the abducted girls remain unaccount-

ed for more than a decade later.

According to the foundation, 187 of the girls have either escaped or been rescued, but no confirmed recovery has been recorded in the past year.

The Chief Executive Officer of MMF, Aisha Muhammed Oyebode, described the Chibok tragedy as a symbol of systemic failure and fading collective responsibility.

"Chibok has become more than a place or a moment in time; it is now a metaphor for neglect and a failure of accountability," Oyebode said.

She added that the tragedy reflects a loss of sustained empathy for victims and families

still grappling with the consequences of the abduction.

She also revealed that more than 40 children were born in captivity and have since returned with their mothers, highlighting the long-term human impact.

She noted that the incident, once a global rallying point, now underscores challenges in sustaining international attention and commitment.

Oyebode expressed concern over continued abductions of schoolchildren in parts of Nigeria, particularly in vulnerable communities.

She warned that recurring incidents have deepened fears among families and weakened confidence in the safety of education, especially for girls.

She called on the Federal Government to intensify efforts to locate the remaining girls and ensure transparency in its operations.

She also urged the United Nations and the international community to re-engage and support coordinated strategies to protect children in conflict-affected areas.

According to her, the impact of the abduction extends beyond those still missing, affecting survivors, families and communities through trauma and disrupted education.

"Chibok must not be remembered only as a tragedy; it must remain a call to action until every missing girl is accounted for," Oyebode said.

# PCRC commends transparency in Police recruitment exercise

ABUJA

The Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) has commended the Police Service Commission (PSC) and the Nigeria Police Force for transparency in the ongoing police recruitment exercise.

A statement by the PCRC spokesperson, Olayemi Esan, said the National Chairman, Alhaji Ibraheem Olaniyan, gave the commendation during an assessment visit to the recruitment centre in Abuja.

Olaniyan described the exercise in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as transparent and inclusive.

He said the PCRC was actively participating in the screening exercise nationwide in collaboration with the PSC and other stakeholders.

According to him, this is the first time the PSC is formally involving the PCRC in the recruitment process, describing it as a significant step towards

strengthening public trust and accountability.

"The presence of key officials, including zonal and FCT PCRC leaders, senior police officers and representatives of civil society organisations, is aimed at ensuring fairness and protecting the rights of indigenous applicants," he said.

He added that the collaborative approach was designed to prevent irregularities and ensure that recruitment slots meant for FCT indigenes are not taken by applicants from other states.

Olaniyan expressed confidence in the potential of the applicants, describing them as "the best set of police constables in the history of Nigeria."

He congratulated the applicants in advance and encouraged them to remain focused throughout the screening stages.

He commended the Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, for his commitment to improving the welfare and development of junior officers.

# NYSC urges corps members to avoid night travel ahead of orientation

OSOGBO

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has advised prospective corps members posted to Osun State to avoid night travel for safety ahead of the 2026 Batch A Stream II orientation exercise.

The Osun NYSC Coordinator, Mr Ita Kubianga, gave the advice in a statement issued by the scheme's spokesperson, Mrs Catherine Otemuyiwa, on Tuesday in Osogbo.

Kubianga urged corps members to prioritise safety by travelling during the day and using recognised motor parks, with assistance from transport unions in the state.

He also called on transport unions to convey corps members to the orientation camp at

approved rates.

According to him, the three-week orientation exercise will hold from April 22 to May 12.

He added that the swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for April 24.

"We advise corps members that night travel exposes them to risks, including accidents and security threats.

"Parents and guardians should support and encourage their children as they undertake this phase of national service," he said.

He urged corps members to adhere strictly to all safety guidelines and remain security conscious.

Kubianga reiterated the commitment of the scheme and stakeholders to the welfare and security of corps members deployed to the state.

# Ejiofor re-elected AANISS President, calls for stronger security engagement

ABUJA

Former Director with the Department of State Services (DSS), Mike Ejiofor, has been re-elected as President of the Alumni Association of the National Institute for Security Studies (AANISS).

This was contained in a statement by the association's Publicity Secretary, Mr Peter Iliya, on Tuesday in Abuja.

Iliya said Ejiofor, alongside

other members, were elected and returned to office during the association's 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Abuja.

According to him, the AGM was preceded by the association's second annual lecture titled "Credible Elections and National Security in Nigeria".

The lecture featured Mike Iguni as guest speaker, with contributions from Okey Ikechukwu, Oluwafunmilayo Parra-Mallam, Jibrin Ibrahim and

Samson Itodo.

Participants at the lecture emphasised that credible, free and fair elections remain critical to strengthening national security, especially ahead of the 2027 general elections.

They also called for actionable strategies and sustained collaboration among stakeholders to ensure electoral integrity and stability.

Ejiofor expressed appreciation for the confidence reposed in him and pledged to advance

the objectives of the association, as well as strengthen its contributions to national security discourse.

"I am grateful for the trust placed in me by members of this association, and I remain committed to serving with renewed dedication and efficiency," he said.

He reaffirmed AANISS' commitment to promoting policy dialogue and professional engagement on security-related issues in Nigeria.

## NEWS

# Reforms shield Nigeria from global shocks, sustain growth —Edun

ABUJA

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, has said ongoing economic reforms are positioning Nigeria to better withstand external shocks and sustain growth.

This was contained in a statement issued by his Special Adviser, Dr Ogbo Okiti.

Edun, who is leading Nigeria's delegation to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group Spring

Meetings in Washington, noted that despite rising global fuel and food prices, government policies are cushioning the impact, maintaining stability and delivering long-term benefits for households and businesses.

He said higher crude oil prices, with Bonny Light exceeding 110 dollars per barrel, present opportunities to boost revenues, strengthen foreign exchange earnings and support fiscal sustainability.

According to him, proactive measures are being implement-

ed to manage rising fuel, diesel and gas prices, ensure supply stability and mitigate cost pressures across key sectors.

Edun added that Nigeria's strong policy framework is sustaining investor confidence, even as global capital flows tighten, positioning the coun-

try as an attractive destination for long-term investment.

He said reforms since 2023, including subsidy removal and exchange rate liberalisation, have strengthened economic fundamentals, improved transparency and enhanced resilience.

Oil production, he noted, has risen to about 1.86 million barrels per day, while the naira-for-crude initiative is boosting domestic refining and easing pressure on consumers.

He further said Nigeria's reclassification as a Frontier Market by FTSE Russell reflects

growing investor confidence, while tariff reforms are enhancing industrial productivity and trade competitiveness.

Edun reaffirmed government's commitment to ensuring reforms translate into job creation, poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth.

## FG probes 'Sharp Sharp' loan apps over data privacy breaches

ABUJA

The Federal Government has commenced investigations into the activities of some digital loan operators, popularly known as 'sharp sharp' lenders, over alleged data privacy violations.

The National Commissioner of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission, Mr Vincent Olatunji, disclosed this while speaking with journalists in Abuja.

He said some operators violate users' privacy by accessing contact lists, sending defamatory messages and sharing personal information without consent in attempts to recover loans.

Olatunji urged Nigerians to

understand their rights and carefully review loan agreements before accepting offers.

He noted that many digital lenders operate without physical offices, making regulation more challenging, but stressed that compliance with data protection laws is mandatory.

He added that agencies such as the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, National Information Technology Development Agency, Nigerian Communications Commission, Central Bank of Nigeria and the police are working to regulate the sector.

He warned that unauthorised access to personal data is an offence and offenders would be prosecuted.

## PenCom raises alarm over rising recruitment scams

LAGOS

The National Pension Commission has warned Nigerians against a surge in recruitment scams involving impersonation of its officials.

In a statement posted on its official X handle, the commission said fraudsters are contacting job seekers through WhatsApp, emails and phone calls with fake employment offers.

It noted that scammers often impose tight deadlines, such as

48 hours, to pressure victims into releasing sensitive information.

According to PenCom, victims are typically asked to submit confidential documents to a supposed "secretary" via WhatsApp — a major red flag.

The commission added that some fraudsters even impersonate its Director-General to lend credibility to their schemes.

PenCom advised Nigerians to ignore and delete suspicious messages and verify all job-related information through official channels.



**INAUGURATION OF NRS HEADQUARTERS:**

L-R: Executive Chairman, Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), Mr Zacch Adedeji; President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio; during the inauguration of the NRS headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

## Import prices rise slightly as trade indices edge up in Q4 2025 —NBS

ABUJA

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) says Nigeria's all-commodity group import index rose by 0.11 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025.

The bureau disclosed this in

its Commodity Price Indices and Terms of Trade report released in Abuja.

It attributed the marginal increase to changes in import prices of paper-making materials, paper products, textiles, mineral products and related articles.

The NBS also reported that the all-commodity export price index increased by 0.12 percent, driven largely by higher prices of miscellaneous manufactured goods, vehicles, aircraft parts, vessels, base metals and plastics.

According to the report, the All Products Terms of Trade (TOT) index rose slightly by 0.01 percent, indicating a mar-

ginal improvement in the ratio of export prices to import prices.

The bureau added that export prices increased across most regions except Oceania, while import prices rose across all regions, contributing to the overall trade movement.

It identified Nigeria's major export destinations in the period as The Netherlands, India, Spain, France and Canada.

## Over 3.38m Nigerians displaced across 14 States in 2023 —NBS

ABUJA

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has disclosed that no fewer than 3,381,228 persons were internally displaced across 14 states in 2023.

This is contained in its Demographic Bulletin 2023 released in Abuja.

According to the report,

Borno State accounted for the highest share at 50.62 percent (1,711,481 persons), followed by Benue with 11.67 percent and Katsina with 7.23 percent.

Gombe, Nasarawa and Kano recorded the lowest shares of displaced persons.

The bulletin also projected Nigeria's population at 221.25 million in 2023, based on data from the National Population

Commission, with Kano, Lagos and Katsina emerging as the most populous states, while Nasarawa and Bayelsa ranked lowest.

On health indicators, maternal conditions accounted for the largest share of health expenditure in 2022, while antenatal care coverage rose from 50 percent in 2011 to 63 percent in 2021.

The report further showed that the United Kingdom remained the largest source of remittances to Nigeria, contributing 12.38 billion dollars in 2023, according to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria.

It also recorded 968 human trafficking cases in 2023, with foreign travel linked to prostitution topping the list.

## Dare blasts Atiku over Jilli airstrikes, calls criticism 'Reckless Politics'

ABUJA

The Presidency has accused former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, of politicising the recent airstrikes on Jilli Market in Borno State, describing his comments as misleading and detrimental to national security efforts.

Mr Sunday Dare, Special Adviser to the President on Media and Communications, in a post on his X handle (@sun-

daydareSD), questioned Atiku's patriotism, saying his reaction to the military operation was "both disappointing and telling."

In a piece titled "ATIKU: QUESTIONABLE PATRIOT," Dare faulted the former Vice President for alleging that the government was targeting civilians.

"At a time when our Armed Forces are taking the fight directly to terrorist enclaves, it is both disappointing and telling

to see Atiku Abubakar politicise the recent airstrikes at Jilli Market by alleging that the government is targeting civilians," Dare said.

He explained that the Nigerian Air Force conducted targeted, intelligence-led strikes over the weekend on insurgent positions within and around the Jilli axis.

According to him, although the location is still referred to as Jilli Market, it has, for years,

ceased to function as a legitimate civilian marketplace, having been overtaken and repurposed as a logistics hub for terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and ISWAP.

"Let it be clear: while the location may still be referred to as 'Jilli Market,' it has not functioned as a legitimate civilian marketplace in any meaningful sense.

"By multiple credible accounts, it has evolved into an operational node within the in-

surgency's supply chain—facilitating movement, coordination and sustenance of violent actors.

"For Atiku Abubakar to ignore this context and frame a legitimate military action as an attack on civilians is not only misleading—it is reckless," Dare said.

He warned that such remarks could distort public understanding and undermine the morale of troops on the frontline.

"What remains difficult to reconcile is the contradiction. He consistently criticises the government for failing to curb insecurity, yet when decisive, intelligence-driven action is taken, he is quick to condemn it. That is not principled opposition; it is opportunism," he added.

Dare stressed the need for clarity and responsible engagement in matters of national security.

## JUDICIARY

## NEWS

# Supreme Court fixes April 22 for PDP leadership battle, hears Turaki faction's 2 appeals

## ABUJA

The Supreme Court has fixed April 22, 2026, for the hearing of two separate appeals filed by the Kabiru Turaki-led faction of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) challenging judgments that invalidated the party's Ibadan National Convention held on November 15–16, 2025.

A five-member panel of the apex court, led by Justice Lawal

Garba, granted the faction's application for accelerated hearing and abridgement of time, in view of the urgency of the matter and its implications for preparations ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The court also ordered that hearing notices be served on all respondents, including Mohammed Abdulrahman, the seventh respondent, who was not represented when the matter came up on Tuesday.

In the first appeal, filed by the Turaki-led group against the PDP faction aligned with the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, counsel to the faction, Chris Uche (SAN), urged the court to expedite proceedings, filing an affidavit of extreme urgency.

Counsel to Austin Nwachukwu and two others, Emmanuel Ukala (SAN), requested 15 days to file his response,

citing the need to obtain complete records from the Court of Appeal's decision nullifying the Ibadan Convention.

However, the apex court ordered all nine respondents to file their replies within five days each and fixed April 22 for hearing.

In the second appeal, involving the Turaki faction and former Jigawa State Governor, Sule Lamido, and others, the court also granted accelerat-

ed hearing and scheduled the matter for the same date.

Lamido had approached the court over his alleged exclusion from the PDP national chairmanship contest, a dispute which earlier led to Federal High Court orders halting the convention process.

Lower courts had ruled against the Turaki faction, nullifying the Ibadan Convention,

restraining the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from recognising its outcome, and, in some instances, limiting access to the party's national secretariat.

The faction, however, maintains that the dispute is an internal party matter and therefore not justiciable, insisting that due process was followed in conducting the convention.



## PROTEST:

Members of Ayetoro Gbede Community in Ijumu Local Government Area protesting an alleged politically motivated attempt to undermine their son, the leadership of INEC, Prof. Joash Amupitan, at INEC headquarters in Abuja.

## 3 remanded over alleged N40m transformer vandalism in Ekiti

## ADO-EKITI

An Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court has ordered the remand of three men over alleged vandalism of electricity transformers and theft of armoured cables valued at over N40 million.

The defendants — Ajayi

Sunday (22), Ibrahim Bello (37), and Ali Adam (30) were arraigned on Tuesday, but their pleas were not taken.

Police prosecutor, ASP Olasunkanmi Bamikole, alleged that the defendants committed the offences between February 23 and March 2, 2025, in Oye-Ekiti and Ilupeju-Ekiti.

He told the court that the defendants vandalised two transformers located at Idofo, near Oye-Ekiti and Ilupeju-Ekiti respectively, and stole armoured cables belonging to the Benin Electricity Distribution Company and the Ekiti State Electricity Board.

The offences, he said, contravene Section 9 of the Miscellaneous Offences Act, Cap M17, Laws of the Federation 2004, and Section 302 of the Criminal

Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The prosecution urged the court to remand the defendants pending legal advice from the office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP).

Chief Magistrate Bankole Oluwasanmi granted the application and ordered their remand at a correctional centre, pending legal advice.

The case was adjourned until May 11 for mention.

## C'River CP calls for full implementation of Criminal Justice Law, officer training

## CALABAR

The Commissioner of Police in Cross River State, Rashid Afegbua, has called for the effective implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law (ACJL) in the state, alongside intensified training of police personnel on human rights and

lawful policing procedures.

Afegbua made the appeal on Tuesday in Calabar when he received members of the ACJL implementation committee.

He said the Inspector-General of Police remained committed to ensuring that officers are properly trained on citizens' constitutional rights and provisions of the Police Act, 2020.

The CP urged the committee to develop modalities for training officers on human rights principles, lawful arrest, search and detention procedures, as well as international standards, including the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the prohibition of torture.

He noted that the command was facing challenges such as

lack of surveillance cameras and absence of legal officers in some rural police stations.

Earlier, the leader of the ACJL team, Mr James Ibor, commended the police for improving documentation systems in the state and reaffirmed the committee's commitment to strengthening justice administration.

## Miner jailed 2yrs for fake bank transfer fraud in Jos

## JOS

A 25-year-old miner, Abubakar Ibrahim, has been sentenced to two years imprisonment by a Jos Magistrates' Court for obtain-

ing goods through a fake bank transfer.

The convict pleaded guilty to the charge.

Magistrate Irene Pati sentenced him without an option of fine and ordered him to pay N120,000

compensation to the complainant, Kulwanu Abubakar.

Prosecutor, Insp. Ibrahim Gokwat, told the court that the convict purchased two truck batteries valued at N120,000 and falsely claimed to have

made a bank transfer which never reflected.

He was later arrested after investigation confirmed the fraud.

The court held that the sentence would serve as deterrence to others.

## Woman arraigned in Lagos over alleged N14m inverter theft, conversion

## IKORODU

A 1-year-old woman, Helen Ugochukwu, was on Tuesday arraigned before an Ikorodu Magistrates' Court in Lagos over alleged conversion and theft of property valued at N14 million.

The defendant, whose address was not provided, pleaded not guilty to a two-count charge of conversion and stealing.

Prosecutor, Insp. Adegeshin Famuyiwa, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on January 19 at Allison Market area of Ikorodu.

He alleged that she obtained

50 pieces of inverters valued at N14 million and N200,000 cash from one Mrs Victoria Owolabi under false pretences and unlawfully converted same to her personal use.

The defendant was later arrested following police investigation.

The offences contravene Sections 314 and 287 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

Magistrate A.O. Ogbe granted bail in the sum of N2 million with two sureties in like sum, ordering verification of sureties' addresses.

The case was adjourned until April 30 for mention.

## Painter jailed 2yrs for car theft, given fine option in Jos

## JOS

A 40-year-old painter, Dominic Maitala, has been sentenced to two years imprisonment by a Jos Magistrates' Court for stealing a car entrusted to him.

The convict pleaded guilty to the charge.

Magistrate Irene Pati sentenced him but gave an option of N100,000 fine and ordered him to pay N7 million compensation

to the complainant, Peter Walar, or serve an additional one-year jail term in default.

Prosecutor, Insp. Ibrahim Gokwat, told the court that the convict was assigned to watch the vehicle at a garage but instead drove it away.

He later claimed he was drunk and unaware of what happened to the vehicle.

The court held that the offence contravenes the Plateau State Penal Code Law.

## Man arraigned over alleged N13.5m land fraud in Badagry

## BADAGRY

A 40-year-old man, Friday Daniel, was on Tuesday arraigned before a Badagry Chief Magistrates' Court in Lagos over alleged fraud involving N13.5 million.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to a two-count charge of fraud and stealing.

Prosecutor, ASP Edet Ekpo, told the court that the defendant allegedly obtained the money from Mr Tijani Adesola under the pretence of selling

two plots of land at Mosafejo, Badagry.

He said the defendant converted the funds for personal use before he was arrested and charged.

The offences contravene Sections 287 and 314 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

Magistrate Nurudeen Layeni granted bail in the sum of N5 million with three sureties, one of whom must be a company director.

The case was adjourned until May 7 for mention.

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## NEWS

## Foreign

## Hamas rejects Gaza disarmament plan, Palestinian official says

Hamas has rejected the disarmament plan of a top figure in President Donald Trump's Gaza peace efforts, a senior Palestinian official familiar with the negotiations has told the BBC.

He accused Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza on the US-led Board of Peace, of bias towards Israel. Last month, Mladenov outlined a framework for Gaza's demilitarisation as part of the second phase of the ceasefire deal agreed by Hamas and Israel in October.

The official said Hamas told regional mediators that it would

not engage in talks on the second phase until Israel fully implemented the terms of the first phase.

Israel has said it will not move forward without progress on Hamas's disarmament.

A Hamas delegation in Cairo was due to meet Egypt's intelligence chief on Tuesday before departing.

The first phase of Trump's peace plan halted the war, returned all Israeli hostages still held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, and saw Israeli forces withdraw partially from Gaza.

In mid-January, US Middle

East envoy Steve Witkoff announced the start of phase two of Trump's plan to end the war, but there has been deadlock between Israel and Hamas since then. The second phase is meant to lead to a permanent end to the war following Gaza's demilitarisation and a full Israeli withdrawal.

Last month, Mladenov laid out a detailed plan for Palestinian armed groups in Gaza to decommission their weapons - linking compliance to the start of reconstruction following Israel's military campaign which devastated the territory.

It was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on Israel on 7

October 2023 in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others taken to Gaza as hostages.

More than 72,330 people have been killed by Israeli military action Gaza since then - including 757 since the ceasefire began on 10 October 2025 - according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

A senior Hamas official told the BBC: "We are waiting for Mladenov to provide a clear timetable for Israel to fulfil the remaining obligations of phase one, along with guarantees to halt Israeli violations, before any discussion of phase two begins."



GAZA MILITARY:

The Gaza ceasefire came into effect in October but is yet to move to its next stage

## JD Vance defends backing 'great guy' Orbán's campaign after landslide defeat

The US vice-president defended last week's visit but said he was sure he could work with Péter Magyar

US Vice-President JD Vance has insisted he was right to stage a two-day campaign visit to back Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán five days before he was voted out of office by opposition party Tisza's landslide victory.

Insisting Orbán was a "great guy" who did a "very good job", Vance told Fox News he was "one of the few European leaders we've seen who's been willing to stand up to the bureaucracy in Brussels".

While he was sad Orbán had lost, he was sure the US would "work very well" with the new government, he said.

Péter Magyar, who led Tisza to victory, had been critical of Vance's intervention, warning last week that "no foreign country may interfere in Hungarian elections".

However, he said on Monday the US was a "strong and important" Nato partner and

if President Donald Trump or anyone else called him he would talk to them.

Orbán will continue to run Hungary in a caretaker role until Magyar is sworn in, and the three party leaders with seats in parliament have been invited to meet President Tamás Sulyok on Wednesday.

Sulyok has the task of convening Hungary's new parliament and recommending the next prime minister by 12 May, and Magyar has urged him to do that as soon as possible and then resign, calling him a "puppet" of Orbán's government.

Magyar has suggested that he could become prime minister on 5 May, or even sooner.

Sulyok's office has made clear to Hungarian media he will not resign, however he is expected to discuss with the three party leaders when to convene the National Assembly and propose a new prime minister.

Péter Magyar aims to be prime minister by about 5 May

In another striking development, the incoming prime

minister said he would appear on public radio and TV on Wednesday ahead of his visit to the president.

Magyar said on Monday that in all the time he had led Hungary's main opposition party he had never been allowed on public TV, until he was asked on Monday morning, after he had swept Fidesz from power.

He said he had refused that initial invitation and pledged to suspend all news coverage on public TV and radio until it could guarantee unbiased coverage. He spoke of having a board to insure state media independence, similar to the model of the BBC and other public broadcasters.

Magyar has set a series of tasks as soon his party comes to office, having won a "super majority" of 137 seats, according to latest preliminary results.

Although they are not final, the incoming Hungarian leader believes Tisza will increase its margin of victory. Winning two-thirds of the 199 seats in parliament means the govern-

ment has the ability to change the constitution and reverse Orbán-era changes.

Describing Hungary as the poorest and most corrupt member of the European Union, he says his government will create an Anti-Corruption Office and a National Asset Recovery and Protection Office, and start the process of joining the EU's European Public Prosecutor's Office.

Viktor Orbán's government became infamous for a system of cronyism that allowed public contracts to go to favoured individuals, while rule of law was compromised by a lack of judicial independence.

Magyar has spoken of Hungary being robbed bare, with billions going missing in state contracts and corruption taking place on an industrial scale.

Top of his priorities will be to unlock billions of euros in EU funding and loans that were frozen because of a variety of issues such as rule of law and democratic backsliding under Orbán.

## US blockade of Iran ports irresponsible and dangerous, China says

China has called the US naval blockade of Iranian ports "irresponsible and dangerous".

Beijing's foreign ministry said the move would "undermine the already fragile ceasefire agreement" and further jeopardise the safety of ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway Iran effectively closed in response to US-Israeli strikes.

The blockade came into force on Monday, a day after peace talks between the US and Iran broke down in Pakistan.

US President Donald Trump has said the measure is intended to force Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. Analysts say the move is also designed to pressure China - the biggest buyer of Iranian oil - to encourage Tehran to open the strait.

Iran's ambassador to the UN has described the US blockade as a "grave violation" of Tehran's sovereignty.

Up until now, Chinese vessels have been among the few managing to make their way through the strait. It is not clear whether they had to pay a toll to Iran in order to do so.

The US blockade could potentially cut off China's supply and have far-reaching consequences for its economy.

"China believes that only by achieving a comprehensive ceasefire and ending the war can we fundamentally create conditions for easing the situation in the strait," China's for-

eign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

"China urges all parties to abide by the ceasefire arrangements, focus on the general direction of dialogue and peace talks, take practical actions to promote the easing of the regional situation, and restore normal traffic in the strait as soon as possible."

Guo also told a news conference on Tuesday that reports China was preparing to deliver new air defence systems to Iran were "completely fabricated".

Trump has threatened to impose a 50% tariff on China's goods if military assistance was provided to Tehran.

"If the US insists on using this as an excuse to impose additional tariffs on China, China will definitely take resolute countermeasures," Guo said.

It comes after US Vice-President JD Vance accused Iran of "economic terrorism" over its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz - having attacked, and threatened to attack, vessels passing through since last month.

"Well, as the president of the United States showed, two can play at that game," he told Fox News.

"If the Iranians are going to try to engage in economic terrorism, we're going to abide by the simple principle that no Iranian ships are getting out, either."

The US has said its military would not impede ships using the strait to go to and from non-Iranian ports.

## Retrial over death of Argentina legend Maradona to begin

A retrial into the death of the football great Diego Maradona, who died aged 60 after suffering heart failure, starts on Tuesday.

The first trial in May 2025 collapsed after one of the three judges on the case allegedly allowed unauthorised filming in court for a documentary.

Maradona's medical team are accused of failing to administer proper medical care, and seven people will be tried for homicide with possible intent. They deny the allegations. If convicted, they face between eight and 25 years in prison.

The football legend had been recovering at his home in Tigre, in Buenos Aires province, after successful surgery on a brain blood clot earlier that month.

Investigators classified the case as culpable homicide, a crime similar to involuntary manslaughter, because they said the accused were aware of the seriousness of Maradona's health condition but did not take the necessary measures to save him.

The heart failure caused him to suffer acute pulmonary oedema, when fluid builds up in the lungs, the preliminary autopsy confirmed.

A panel of medical experts, asked by prosecutors to investigate

Maradona's medical team, said the treatment he received at his home was "deficient and reckless".

It concluded that the footballer "would have had a better chance of survival" with adequate treatment in an appropriate medical facility.

He is remembered as one of the game's most gifted players

The seven people on trial include his main medical adviser, Leopoldo Luque, and his psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov.

His former nurse, Dahiana Gisela Madrid, will stand in a separate trial.

Around 100 people are set to testify in front of a new set of judges at a court in San Isidro, including Maradona's daughters. The trial is expected to last until July.

When the footballer died on 25 November 2020, then President of Argentina Alberto Fernandez declared three days of national mourning.

"Thank you for having existed, Diego. We're going to miss you all our lives," he said.

Maradona started his career with Argentinos Juniors. He went on to represent Argentina in four World Cups, scoring 34 goals, including the infamous "Hand of God" goal against England in 1986.

**Foreign****NEWS****Wadagni claims landslide victory in Benin presidential vote**

Romuald Wadagni has secured a decisive win in Benin's presidential election, taking 94 percent of the vote according to provisional results released by the electoral commission.

Wadagni's main challenger, Paul Houngbe, conceded defeat even before the final count was complete, offering his "republican congratulations" and calling for unity beyond political divides.

Low turnout, calm vote  
Despite the landslide, turnout was uneven, particularly in urban areas where participation ranged between 20 and 40 percent in some polling stations.

Overall turnout stood at 58.75 percent, with observers

praising a generally peaceful and well-organised vote.

Continuity and challenges  
Backed by outgoing president Patrice Talon, Wadagni's victory signals continuity after a decade of economic growth and infrastructure expansion.

However, major challenges remain, including high poverty levels and a widening wealth gap, as well as rising jihadist violence in the country's north.

Long road ahead  
With presidential terms now extended to seven years, the next elections are not due until 2033, leaving Wadagni with a long mandate to address security and social concerns.

**CAMPAIGN RALLY:**

Presidential candidate Romuald Wadagni greets supporters at a campaign rally in Cotonou, Benin, Friday, April 10, 2026.

**Carney says Canadians trust his plan after he wins majority**

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney says the country's voters have demonstrated trust in his government's plan, after his Liberal Party secured a slim majority in the House of Commons.

The Liberals are projected to have won all three by-elections that took place on Monday. These are on top of gains made over the last year through five opposition members of parliament defecting to Carney's party.

The PM will now be able to pass legislation without relying on support from opposition benches, and he could stave off a federal election until 2029.

Opposition leader Pierre Poilievre said Carney had relied on defections to win his majority, in an attempt to gain "power without any accountability".

The by-elections took place in two Toronto-area ridings, or constituencies - Scarborough Southwest and University-Rosedale - as well as in the Quebec riding of Terrebonne, where the contest was closely fought.

Through the night, Canadian media projected wins for the Liberal candidates in each place.

Carney congratulated all three winning Liberal candidates, who were Doly Begum, Danielle Martin and Tatiana Auguste respectively.

In a statement posted on X, the PM wrote that the various candidates from all parties who had contested the elections had "strengthened our democracy at a decisive moment for Canada".

He went on to say: "Tonight, voters have placed their trust in our new government's plan. We accept that support with humility, determination and a clear understanding of what this moment demands."

Liberals will now hold 174 of the 343 seats in the House of Commons, giving Carney more latitude with his political agenda.

Carney has focused that agenda on boosting Canada's economy, notably in the face of a challenging trade relationship with the US, the country's largest trading partner.

He will face new pressure to also deliver on significant domestic promises, including major investments in housing construction and on national defence, and making Canada an "energy superpower".

"The time for delays or excuses will have passed and with it the expectations will rise across multiple policy arenas," wrote Scotiabank analyst Derek Holt last week on the expected Liberal gains.

On Tuesday morning, Carney said voters "placed their trust in Canada's new government's plan".

"We accept their support with humility, determination and a clear understanding of what this moment demands for our country."

He said he would move quickly to deliver on his commitments at a news conference where he announced a temporary suspension of federal fuel tax on diesel and petrol, similar to a proposal that had been pushed by the Conservatives as fuel prices rise due to the Iran conflict.

**Cameroon separatists to pause fighting ahead of Pope visit**

Anglophone separatists in Cameroon have announced a period of "safe travel passage" and halted fighting ahead of Pope Leo XIV's visit to the conflict-hit region this week.

Leaders of several armed and secessionist groups said the three-day measure was in recognition of the "profound spiritual importance" of the papal visit, which starts on Wednesday, and the need to safeguard civilian life.

In a statement from Unity Alliance - which brings the groups together - they said they would

facilitate the movement of those celebrating the visit. The government is yet to comment.

A near-decade of violence in the English-speaking regions has left at least 6,000 dead and many more forced from their homes.

Pope Leo is currently in Algeria for a second day as part of his 11-day tour of the continent, in which he will also visit Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea.

Peace is one of the major theme's of his visit.

The pontiff arrived in Algeria on Monday, marking the first

visit by any pope to the predominantly Sunni Muslim country.

It is also the birthplace of St Augustine, and Leo XIV is the first pontiff from the order to follow his teachings.

He is now in Annaba - where the saint was a bishop - and in the afternoon, is expected to celebrate Mass at the Basilica of Saint Augustine.

During a meeting at a nearby nursing home run by Catholic nuns, the Pope reiterated his message of peace.

"God's heart is torn apart by wars, violence, injustice and lies," he said, explaining that his heart was "not with the wicked,

the arrogant or the proud".

"God's heart is with the little ones and the humble, and with them he builds up his kingdom of love and peace day by day, just as you are striving to do here in your daily service, friendship and life together."

Pope Leo visited the archaeological site of the ancient Hippo Regius in Annaba

The Pope's second country stop is Cameroon, where he will visit Bamenda, the capital of the country's North-West region.

The city is regarded as the centre of Cameroon's conflict between Anglophone separatists and state forces.

**Sixteen injured after ex-student opens fire at high school in Turkey**

At least 16 people have been injured after an ex-student opened fire at a high school in south-eastern Turkey.

The attacker, who was in his late teens, fired "indiscriminately with a shotgun" before killing himself with the weapon after being "cornered by police", local governor Hasan Şildak said.

Those injured include 10 students, four teachers, a cafeteria worker and a police officer, he said.

The incident happened at

around 09:30 local time (06:30 GMT) at the Ahmet Koyuncu Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School in Siverek district. It has since been evacuated.

The wounded were taken to hospital, with five later transferred to other facilities for further treatment.

The motive for the attack is not yet known and an investigation has been launched.

Şildak said the attacker had no criminal record and that the school was considered safe by police. School shootings are rare in Turkey.

Local media reported that the attacker had recently posted on the school's social media accounts, threatening that there would be an attack "in a few days".

One witness told local media: "He [the gunman] was a kid, about 17-18 years old. Suddenly, he walked through the front door (of the school yard). As soon as he entered, he pulled out a gun. It was a long, stocky one, like one of those pump-action shotguns with rims."

"He immediately started shooting left and right. Then he fired towards the school. Then

he ran inside. He started shooting at anyone who came in front of him, and then with the students' screams, the teachers' screams, everyone immediately scattered."

One of the injured students, Ömer Furkan Sayar, told TRT, Turkey's state broadcaster, that the gunman went into at least two classrooms, including his own.

"First we threw ourselves to the ground, then two of us jumped out of the window. He didn't say anything to us, he just came in and started shooting," he said.

**Spain approves plan to give around 500,000 undocumented migrants legal status**

Spain's government has approved plans to give legal status to 500,000 undocumented migrants, allowing them to be integrated formally into the workforce.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez described his government's decision as both "an act of justice" and a necessity for Spain.

The prime minister said the legislation sought to acknowledge that the migrants "already form part of our everyday lives".

In a letter to Spaniards posted on

social media, Sánchez, a socialist, said the mass legalisation sought "to acknowledge the reality of nearly half a million people who already form part of our everyday lives".

Spain's conservative opposition People's Party (PP) has pledged to attempt to block the legalisation, which it said rewards illegal migrants and would encourage more to come.

The government's plan will offer a one-year, renewable residence permit to undocumented migrants. In order to be eligible, ap-

plicants must prove that they have already spent five months living in Spain and have a clean criminal record. They have between 16 April and the end of June to apply.

Sánchez said migrants helped "build the rich, open and diverse Spain that we are and to which we aspire".

The prime minister said these migrants are needed to sustain the economy and public services in a country whose population is ageing. He also said it was the right course of action for a nation

which in the past had seen many of its own nationals emigrate in search of better opportunities.

The Funcas think-tank estimates that there are around 840,000 undocumented migrants in Spain, the vast majority of whom are Latin American.

"This is going to benefit a lot of people, give them access to work and to a better quality of life," said Ricardo, a Bolivian graphic designer who has been unable to maintain stable employment and plans to apply for the scheme.

**DRC: Dozens gather for 'standing parliament' in Kinshasa**

In the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, dozens gathered at what is known as a 'standing parliament.' Among the crowd were supporters of the presidential party.

The gatherings are being used to both test and champion certain ideas from those in power, according to observers. Some spoke of the conflict in the country.

"When we finish the war in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, that will be the moment when we will change the Consti-

tution," Jean-Claude Mwamba, coordinator of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) 'standing parliaments.'

"All those things Kabila said, that there is a risk of 'Sudanization', that will not happen here. We are united, the Congolese people is united," he added.

Some observers believe the country's president is exploiting the seemingly spontaneous gatherings to press for constitutional change to allow him a third term in the role.

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EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

## FEATURES

# From words to proof: Okpebholo's game-changing tour with Eedris Abdulkareem

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

In a political environment often dominated by press statements and counter-statements, the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has opted for a different path, one that replaces rhetoric with visible results.

His recent decision to take outspoken Nigerian musician Eedris Abdulkareem on a tour of ongoing and completed projects across Edo State signals a notable shift in governance communication, from words to proof.

The visit came against the backdrop of public criticism, as Abdulkareem had questioned what governments, particularly under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, were doing with the proceeds from the removal of fuel subsidy.

Rather than respond with a conventional rebuttal, Okpebholo chose a more demonstrative approach by inviting the critic to assess the situation firsthand.

What followed went beyond a routine inspection. It evolved into a deliberate transparency initiative that allowed an independent voice to verify the administration's claims directly. From road projects to schools and healthcare facilities, the governor showcased the tangible outcomes of his policies, reinforcing the idea that governance must ultimately be



Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo with Nigerian musician Eedris Abdulkareem.

judged by visible impact.

Speaking during the tour, Okpebholo reiterated his commitment to leaving Edo State better than he met it, stressing that development must translate into real improvements in

people's lives. He noted that increased federal allocations are being strategically deployed to deliver critical infrastructure, adding that growing public support reflects projects that residents can see and experience.

For Abdulkareem, the experience marked a turning point. Initial skepticism gave way to acknowledgement, as the musician openly commended the scale of work he witnessed. His remarks carry weight, not necessarily as

a political endorsement, but as validation grounded in direct observation.

This is where the governor's strategy stands out. By engaging a critic rather than dismissing him, Okpebholo transformed doubt into an opportunity to reinforce credibility. In doing so, he broadened the conversation beyond one individual to a wider public that shares similar concerns.

Critics who argue that the governor accorded undue attention to Abdulkareem may be overlooking a key point. In today's communication landscape, influence matters. By engaging a figure with an independent voice and a broad audience, the governor ensured that a message backed by evidence would travel further and resonate more deeply.

More importantly, the tour highlights a leadership style anchored in openness. It reflects a willingness to be scrutinised, confidence in performance, and an understanding that public trust is built not through declarations, but through demonstration.

At a time when public scepticism remains high, Okpebholo's approach offers a compelling lesson in governance: the most effective response to criticism is not always a statement, but proof.

And sometimes, the most powerful message a leader can send is simple: come and see.

## Media as a frontline tool against crimes and cultural erosion

DAUDA PETER IBRAHIM AND  
OSUMAH AUGUSTINE

In an era defined by rapid information flow and global interconnectedness, the mass media has emerged as one of the most potent instruments for shaping public consciousness, influencing behaviour, and safeguarding societal values. From traditional platforms such as newspapers, radio and television to the expansive reach of the internet, the media continues to serve as a bridge between events and public perception, transmitting ideas and images across vast and diverse audiences.

Beyond its conventional roles of informing, educating and entertaining, the media has increasingly assumed a critical position in the fight against crimes against humanity and the preservation of cultural identity. While freedom of expression remains a cornerstone of media practice, regulatory frameworks and ethical standards have become necessary to prevent the dissemination of harmful or morally corrosive content. Such oversight ensures that the media does not inadvertently contribute to the erosion of societal values through the promotion of obscenity or narratives deemed detrimental to public morality.

Experts argue that the media's contribution to crime control is both complex and multifaceted. As a powerful communication tool, it not only exposes criminal activities but also highlights their consequences, thereby shaping public discourse and influencing policy responses. Through consistent reporting on crime and justice, the media reinforces social norms and, at times, amplifies certain issues to draw attention to underlying threats, prompting calls for stronger preventive and corrective measures.

A growing body of thought also underscores the media's role in countering hate speech and fostering intercultural dialogue. Social media platforms, in particular, have become vital spaces where young people engage in advocacy, cross-cultural exchanges and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing tensions and promoting understanding among diverse groups. At the same time, professional journalists and media practitioners deploy investigative and analytical skills to provide deeper insights into the causes and consequences of criminal behaviour, ensuring that reporting goes beyond headlines to address root issues.

Importantly, the media has expanded its scope to include marginalised voices in public discourse. By amplifying the experiences of dis-

placed persons, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups, it contributes to social cohesion and helps bridge information gaps that could otherwise fuel conflict. This inclusive approach not only enhances awareness but also strengthens collective efforts to combat crime and injustice.

Another significant dimension of media intervention lies in peace-building. Through deliberate and sustained engagement, the media supports initiatives aimed at pre-

venting the escalation of conflicts and transforming potentially violent situations into avenues for dialogue and reconciliation. By promoting narratives of tolerance, accountability and mutual respect, it plays a stabilising role in societies prone to tension and unrest.

Investigative journalism, in particular, remains a cornerstone of accountability. By exposing corruption, abuse of power and systemic failures, the media helps to combat impunity and uphold the rule of law. Its capacity to bring hidden injustices to light

also reinforces the protection of human rights, raising public awareness and mobilising action against violations.

Taken together, these roles underscore the enduring relevance of the media as a defender of societal values and human dignity. As societies continue to grapple with evolving forms of crime and cultural dislocation, the media's responsibility to inform, scrutinise and unify becomes even more critical, positioning it as an indispensable ally in the quest for justice and social order.

*Its capacity to bring hidden injustices to light also reinforces the protection of human rights, raising public awareness and mobilising action against violations*



# Addressing the mental health crisis among Nigerian students

FOLASADE AKPAN (NAN)

In December 2025, the reported death of Nigerian Law School student Ayomiposi Ojajuni reignited concerns over the fragile state of students' mental health in Nigeria.

He was allegedly barred from writing the Bar Final examinations at the Yola campus in Adamawa.

The incident, though still under investigation, has once again brought to the fore the intense academic pressure, emotional strain and limited psychological support systems confronting many young people in tertiary institutions.

Ojajuni, a graduate of Olabisi Onabanjo University, was said to have received a series of queries from school authorities before discovering he would not be allowed to sit the professional examinations scheduled for the same day.

Available data underscores the urgency of the issue.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in every eight people globally lives with a mental health condition, with depression and anxiety among the leading causes of illness among adolescents and young adults.

In Nigeria, experts estimate that one in four young people may be experiencing some form of mental health challenge, yet access to care remains limited due to stigma, cost and a shortage of professionals.

Against this backdrop, students across universities and professional schools face mounting pressures, including heavy academic workloads, financial constraints, family expectations and social comparisons.

Experts say these factors can significantly affect mental wellbeing if not properly managed.

Sharing his experience, Mr Funbi Phillip, a law graduate of Lead City University, Ibadan, described the mental strain associated with studying law as one of the most demanding aspects of his academic journey.

According to him, the constant

pressure to keep up with coursework, assignments, legal drafting and memorisation of numerous cases often felt overwhelming.

"The most challenging part for me was the mental pressure of having to keep up with heavy coursework, assignments, drafting briefs and memorising cases.

"It is a lot, but with consistency, it becomes manageable," he said.

Phillip emphasised that effective time management was critical to navigating the demands of law school.

"I prioritise my time based on urgency. I make sure I handle continuous assessments before focusing on exams. Everything is about planning."

He added that a turning point in his academic journey came when he shifted from rote memorisation to a deeper understanding of legal principles, noting that success in law school requires critical thinking, strong writing skills, time management and emotional resilience.

Similarly, students in other demanding disciplines report comparable experiences.

A pharmacy undergraduate, Ms Tiamiyu Omotayo of the same institution, said balancing academic expectations with personal wellbeing and career aspirations could be challenging.

According to her, practical exposure through internships helped her cope with the rigours of pharmacy education.

"The transition from theory to clinical practice is very important. It helps you appreciate what you have learned in class," she said.

However, she noted that one of her biggest struggles was coping with unmet personal expectations regarding academic performance.

Omotayo said that although her results were good, they did not always align with the high standards she set for herself.

To manage stress, she said she deliberately took breaks and remained focused on her long-term goals, ad-



vising prospective students to pursue the profession out of passion rather than financial expectations.

Experts say such experiences are far from isolated.

Rev. Fr. Anthony Azuwiki, Head of the Department of Private and Property Law at Veritas University, Abuja, said emotional distress among young people is becoming an increasing concern.

According to him, students are particularly vulnerable as they face academic demands alongside broader socio-economic challenges.

He identified parental expectations as a major source of stress, noting that the inability to meet such expectations often leaves young people feeling overwhelmed.

Azuwiki also cited financial hardship, relationship challenges and health conditions as contributing factors.

He further pointed to policy gaps in Nigeria's mental health framework.

While acknowledging the Mental Health Act signed in 2023 as a step forward, he noted that it does not fully decriminalise attempted suicide nationwide.

"The law recognises attempted suicide as a psychiatric emergency, which is progress.

"However, it does not explicitly decriminalise it, despite growing understanding that such cases require care rather than punishment," he said.

He stressed that institutions have a duty to protect students' wellbeing through accessible counselling services, confidentiality and supportive environments that discourage stigma.

Corroborating this view, mental health professionals highlight systemic challenges.

Mrs Rosemary Uwaleme, a mental health counsellor at Inspire Minds Services, said emotional distress among Nigerian undergraduates is

widespread.

She attributed this to financial difficulties, unstable family backgrounds and limited access to support systems.

"Many students do not seek help because of stigma. There is also the issue of cost and the limited availability of services on campuses," she said.

Uwaleme called for stronger counselling systems, increased awareness and regular training for mental health professionals within educational institutions.

In the same vein, psychologists emphasise preventive approaches.

Prof. Remi Alarape of the University of Ibadan urged tertiary institutions to establish robust mental health support systems to prevent students in distress from reaching breaking points.

"Without effective coping strategies, students may equate failure in examinations with failure in life. This can lead to deep emotional distress," he said.

He advocated a culture that prioritises wellbeing alongside academic achievement and encourages open conversations about mental health.

Beyond institutions, civil society organisations are also stepping in.

The Dora-Care Behavioural Foundation recently organised a Mental Health First Aid outreach for students in Lagos, aimed at equipping young people with knowledge and basic support skills.

Its founder, Ms Akinyelure Feyikemi, said early awareness was key to building resilience among students.

"Equipping students with the tools to understand and support their mental health is crucial for raising a generation that is both academically capable and emotionally resilient," she said.

Medical experts also underscore the link between mental and physical health.

Dr Joseph Ogba of the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, described mental health as fundamental to overall wellbeing.

"There is no physical health without mental health," he said. (NAN FEATURE)

# Experts advocate reforms to strengthen electricity value chain

LAGOS: Nigeria's electricity sector remains richly endowed with energy resources, yet continues to struggle to keep the lights on for more than 200 million people.

For decades, the promise of stable power has oscillated between hope and frustration. Frequent grid collapses, gas supply challenges, mounting debts and ageing infrastructure have combined to create a crisis affecting both homes and industries.

With an installed capacity of over 13,000 megawatts, actual generation typically hovers between 4,000 and 5,000 megawatts, sometimes dipping lower due to gas constraints. The shortfall forces businesses to rely heavily on diesel generators, raising operating costs, while households endure prolonged outages.

At the core of the challenge is a

fragile power value chain. Generation companies grapple with gas shortages and liquidity issues, the transmission network remains overstretched, while distribution companies contend with metering gaps, revenue losses and operational inefficiencies.

In response, the Federal Government, through the Ministry of Power, has introduced a series of reforms aimed at stabilising the sector. A key component is a debt resolution plan of about N3.3 trillion approved by President Bola Tinubu to address longstanding liabilities across the value chain.

The initiative is complemented by a broader N4 trillion framework, including bond issuances executed through the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading mechanism, designed to improve liquidity and restore investor confidence.

Some generation companies have

already signed settlement agreements, with funds released to ease financial pressures and support operations.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Power, Dr Adebayo Adelabu, there have been modest improvements in peak generation, alongside efforts to promote long-term sustainability. Tariff adjustments for high-end consumers are also helping to reduce subsidy burdens while boosting sector revenue, signalling a gradual shift toward cost-reflective pricing long advocated by industry experts.

Across the board, stakeholders agree that Nigeria's power sector stands at a critical juncture. The path forward will require not just policy ambition, but sustained execution, strengthened value chains, improved regulatory certainty, and investment in modern, resilient infrastructure.

However, some experts, in separate interviews with newsmen on Monday, cautioned that financial interventions alone may not resolve the sector's deep-rooted challenges.

Mr Chinedu Bosah, National Coordinator of the Coalition for Affordable and Regular Electricity (CARE), maintained that systemic inefficiencies, particularly in the gas supply chain, continue to undermine progress.

Nigeria still struggles to fully harness its over 200 trillion cubic feet of gas, as pricing and supply challenges often limit its use for domestic power generation.

Another energy expert, Dr Olukayode Akinrolabu, a member of Lagos State University's Science and Technology Education Research Group, called for a calibrated reform approach. He said this could deepen private sector participation in gener-

ation and distribution while preserving strategic oversight of transmission infrastructure.

He warned that the national grid, which is unable to evacuate more than 5,000 megawatts, remains the system's weakest link.

Similarly, power expert Mr Francis Bada advocated decentralisation, urging authorities to empower states and private investors to develop embedded and renewable energy solutions.

Bada, a consultant with Adglow Renewable Energy, noted that models like the Aba integrated power system "demonstrate the potential of localised electricity networks."

"Ultimately, the stakes extend far beyond electricity. Reliable power is the backbone of industrial growth, job creation and national development," he said. (NAN FEATURE)

# Sports

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

## World Cup: Queiroz named Ghana coach ahead of World Cup



CARLOS QUEIROZ

Ghana have appointed Carlos Queiroz as head coach, the country's football association said on Monday, with the Portuguese set to make his fifth consecutive World Cup appearance. Sports

Queiroz, 73, left his role as Oman coach last month after the side failed to qualify for the 2026 World Cup.

Ghana were left without a coach 72 days before the World Cup kickoff after parting company with Otto Addo following friendly defeats by Austria and Germany in March.

"The Executive Council of

the Ghana Football Association, working with all key stakeholders, has appointed Carlos Queiroz as head coach of the senior national team, the Black Stars," the GFA said in a statement.

Queiroz led Portugal to the round of 16 at the 2010 World Cup and later coached Iran at the last three editions of the tournament, recording three wins in 13 matches. Soccer

Born in Mozambique, the former goalkeeper has also held coaching positions with Egypt, Japan, Colombia, and South Africa, and previously led Portugal in the early 1990s.



EKITI QUEENS

## Ekiti Govt warns against stadium violence as Ekiti Queens return home

The Ekiti State Government has reiterated its zero tolerance for stadium violence ahead of the return of Ekiti Queens FC to the Oluwemi Kayode Stadium, Ado Ekiti, for their Matchday 15 clash against Pacesetter Queens.

This was made known by the Technical Advisor on Sports Development to Governor Biodun Oyejebanji, Dr Mrs Olusola Osetoba, who cautioned fans and supporters to maintain order and decorum during the encounter.

According to the team's media officer Tosin Popoola, Ekiti Queens will be playing in front

of their home crowd for the first time this season after being banished to the MKO Stadium in Abeokuta, Ogun State since December 10, 2025.

The Coach Jacob Vandi-led side will face their southwest rivals, Pacesetter Queens of Ibadan, in what is expected to be a highly competitive derby at 4pm on Wednesday, April 15, 2026.

The hosts go into the fixture with confidence following a 2-0 victory in the first leg in Ibadan, where goals from Ismail Zainab and Winifred Eyebhoria secured maximum points.

## Nigerian-descent Okafor hits brace to sink Manchester United at Old Trafford

Nigeria had every reason to celebrate on a dramatic Premier League night as Nigerian descent forward Noah Arinzechukwu Okafor delivered a match-winning performance, scoring twice to power Leeds United to a 2-1 away victory over Manchester United at Old Trafford.

The brace from Okafor not only secured a morale-boosting win for Leeds but also reinforced the growing impact of players of Nigerian heritage on the global stage. However, in a twist that continues to resonate within Nigerian football circles, Okafor—who was born to a Nigerian father and a Swiss mother—has already pledged his international allegiance to Switzerland, placing his international future firmly outside the Super Eagles setup. Soccer

Leeds, battling to steer clear of relegation, showed hunger and intensity from the outset, unsettling their more fancied hosts who appeared sluggish after the international break. The visitors' early intent paid off when Okafor calmly side-footed home the opening goal after sustained pressure high up the pitch.

He doubled the advantage in the 29th minute, showcasing composure and power as his strike from outside the box took a deflection before beating

the goalkeeper, capping a dominant first-half display from the visitors.

Manchester United's frustrations deepened early in the second half when Lisandro Martinez was sent off after a VAR review adjudged him to have pulled the hair of Leeds striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin—a decision that sparked anger from the home bench.



## Olympic qualification in focus as NSC boosts Judo team preparations

Bukola Olopade, Director-General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), paid a morale-boosting visit to the camp of Nigeria's senior judo team on Monday as preparations intensify for the forthcoming African Senior Judo Championship in Nairobi.

Olopade, accompanied by

members of his delegation, met with the athletes during a training session and reassured them of the Federal Government's full support ahead of the continental competition later this month.

He reiterated the Commission's commitment to ensuring optimal preparation for the

team, stressing that all necessary measures are being taken to support their quest for success.

"I commend your dedication and commitment," Olopade told the athletes. "You must remain disciplined and continue to work hard to achieve a successful outing in Kenya."

He also conveyed goodwill from the Chairman of the Commission, Shehu Dikko, noting that the leadership remains determined to see sports such as judo receive the support required to reach their full potential.

Highlighting the importance of the championship, Olopade pointed out that the tournament serves as a pathway to Olympic qualification, underlining the seriousness attached to the team's preparations.



JUDO TEAM

## Arrested Senegalese fans face jail terms as appeal court upholds judgment



SENEGAL FANS

The Rabat Court of Appeal has upheld the sentences handed down to a group of Senegalese football supporters, confirming the earlier ruling of a lower court.

According to the judgment, nine supporters will serve one-year prison terms, while six others received six-month sentences.

An additional three supporters were handed three-month

jail terms. The fines imposed during the initial trial were also maintained.

However, three of the convicted supporters are expected to be released this Saturday, having completed their three-month sentences.

The ruling brings closure to the legal proceedings, as the appeal court reaffirmed the penalties without any modifications.

## New trial over Maradona's death begins in Argentina

A new trial over the death of Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona will begin on Tuesday, with seven members of his medical team charged with negligent homicide.

This comes nearly a year after a previous case collapsed in a mistrial.

A court in San Isidro, near Buenos Aires, will hear testimony from just under 100 witnesses as it tries Maradona's medical team over alleged negligence in the death of the 1986 World Cup champion.

His medical team has denied wrongdoing.

The defendants are psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque, psychologist Carlos Angel Diaz, physician Nancy Edith Forlini, nurse Ricar-

do Almiron, head nurse Mariano Ariel Perroni, and physician Pedro Pablo Di Spagna.

An eighth defendant, nurse Daghiana Madrid, will be tried in a separate jury trial, with no date yet set.

Two months into the first trial, which started last March, a mistrial was declared when one of three judges, Julieta Makintach, resigned after video surfaced showing her being interviewed by a camera crew in the corridors of the courthouse and in her office as part of a documentary, in breach of judicial rules.

The retrial will require both prosecutors and defense lawyers to reassess their strategies after the first trial aired photographs, videos, audio recordings and forensic evidence.



DIEGO MARADONA

# Osimhen emerges as top target as Yamal makes preference clear

Highly rated Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal has reportedly expressed a strong desire to see

Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen join him at the club ahead of next season.

According to Spanish outlet

Fichajes, the teenage winger has indicated a preference for Barcelona to prioritise a move for Osimhen as they look to strengthen their attacking options.

Osimhen, currently playing for Galatasaray, is said to be among several high-profile forwards being considered by the Catalan side. Other names linked with the club include Julian Alvarez of Atletico Madrid and Harry Kane of Bayern Munich.

Football analysts suggest that Yamal's creativity, pace, and delivery from wide areas

would complement Osimhen's physicality, movement, and clinical presence in the penalty box, potentially forming a formidable attacking partnership.

However, any potential deal could prove financially challenging. Galatasaray are reportedly open to negotiations but are expected to demand a significant transfer fee for the Nigerian international.

The Turkish club is believed to have placed a valuation of €150 million on Osimhen—approximately double the fee they paid to sign him from Napoli last summer.



VICTOR OSIMHEN

# Handball Federation eyes more Success after Zone 3 Triumph as NSC receives victorious teams

Bukola Olopade, Director-General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), has hailed Nigeria's U-18 and U-20 male handball teams following their impressive performances at the IHF Trophy Zone 3 in Lomé

Olopade made the remarks on Monday while receiving the victorious teams at his office in Abuja, noting that their success has renewed confidence in the country's male athletes.

"Your performance in Togo has demonstrated that handball is a progressive sport that deserves greater support from both the private sector and the Commission," he said.

He added that while Nigeria's female athletes have consistently delivered strong results on the international stage, the recent achievements of the male teams represent a welcome development.

Olopade also expressed optimism about the sport's future, recalling his observations at the National Sports Festival in Ogun State, where he witnessed promising displays. He noted that with sustained investment and support, Nigeria could challenge the dominance of North African nations in the sport.

The NSC Director-General commended the leadership of the Handball Federation of Nigeria, led by Jibril Saidu, for

their commitment to developing handball in the country.

He further assured the federation of the Commission's continued backing as preparations begin for upcoming continental competitions later in the year.

In his response, Saidu expressed gratitude to the NSC for its support, noting that the federation is approaching the next continental tournament with the ambition of securing further success.



TEAM NIGERIA

# WAFCON: African teams fine-tune preparations ahead of WAFCON 2026

African women's national teams are stepping up preparations for the Women's Africa Cup of Nations 2026, with a packed April FIFA international window offering

a crucial opportunity to assess strengths and refine tactics. Sports

With the continental tournament just months away, teams across Africa are engaging in a mix of regional friend-

lies and intercontinental fixtures as part of the FIFA Series, aiming to build momentum and test combinations.

Clearly stated ambitions From 10 April, Botswana will get proceedings underway against Saudi Arabia.

The following day, Tunisia face Benin in a fixture that should offer the Carthage Eagles an opportunity to explore new attacking options against an opponent known for their defensive discipline.

A day later, Morocco host Tanzania in one of the stand-out fixtures of the window. The Atlas Lionesses, who have enjoyed an impressive run in recent years, face a Tanzanian side eager to continue its upward trajectory.



AFRICAN TEAMS

# World Athletics Relays: Team Nigeria unveils squad ahead of Botswana showdown

Team Nigeria has released its provisional squad for the upcoming World Athletics Relays scheduled to take place in Botswana next month, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) confirmed the list as preparations intensify for the global relay event, which serves as a key qualification pathway for major international championships.

Nigeria will compete in three events at the competition, having officially secured qualification in the

Mixed 4x100m relay as well as the Men's and Women's 4x400m relays.

The selected athletes are expected to commence final preparations in the coming weeks, with the technical crew focusing on baton exchanges and team chemistry crucial elements in relay success.

Meanwhile, World Athletics is set to release the final and confirmed entry list for all participating nations in the next few days, which will provide further clarity on lane draws and competing teams.



BUKOLA OLOPADE



RUKAYAT SULEIMON, (RIGHT)

# Sambo: Lagos governor hails Suleimon's historic World Cup triumph

Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has commended Rukayat Suleimon for becoming the first female blind sambist to win World Sambo Cup gold.

Sanwo-Olu spoke in a statement on Monday by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr Gboyega Akosile.

He praised Suleimon, a pioneer female sambist, for bringing pride to Lagos and Nigeria at the International Sambo Federation tournament in Yerevan, Armenia.

The governor noted that the Lagos judo champion defied the odds, defeating opponents from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the women's 54kg category.

He said: "Congratulations to

Suleimon for making Nigeria and Africa proud by winning gold at the World Sambo Cup in Yerevan.

"I am proud she is the first Nigerian and African to win international sambo gold, and the first female blind sambist globally to achieve this feat."

Sanwo-Olu described her achievement as remarkable, reflecting the excellence Nigeria offers the world.

He added: "Winning gold on an international debut highlights her preparation, determination and dedication to the competition."

The governor said Suleimon's success would inspire young girls across Nigeria to pursue their ambitions with confidence and resilience.

# AFN releases 24-man list for World Relays in Gaborone

The Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) has released a list of 24 athletes for the forthcoming World Athletics Relays scheduled for May 2 and 3 in Gaborone, Botswana.

The list made public by the AFN's Technical Committee after the successful entries included veteran athletes Patience Okon George, Blessing Ogundiran, Chidi Okezie, Ojeli Ifeanyi Emmanuel, Enoch Adegoke and Favour Oghene-Tejiri Ashe.

The list also included new kids on the blocks as Gafari Badmus, Asuquo Ezekiel Eno, Lawrence Jacinta, Jimoh Toheebat and Tejiri Godwin.

Team Nigeria is competing in all the 6 relays events.

SEE FULL LIST OF ATHLETES AS ATTACHED

**4x100 MEN**

Enoch Adegoke  
Favour Tejire Ashe  
James Taiwo Emmanuel  
Chidera Ezeakor  
Tejire Godwin

**4x400M MEN**

Ezekiel Enoh Azukwo

Gafari Badmus  
Victor Ime  
Samson Nathaniel  
Emmanuel Ojeli  
Chidi Okezie

**4x100M WOMEN**

Jenifer Chukwuka  
Rosemary Chukwuma  
Miracle Ezechukwu  
Rosemary Nwankwo  
Blessing Ogundiran  
Maria Thompson Omokwe

**4x400M WOMEN**

Anita Enaruna  
Patience Okon George  
Toheebat Jimoh  
Taiwo Mary Kudoro  
Jecinta Lawrence  
Esther Okon

**4x100M MIXED**

Enoch Adegoke  
Rosemary Chukwuma  
James Taiwo Emmanuel  
Chidera Ezeaku  
Miracle Ezechukwu  
Blessing Ogundiran

**4x400M MIXED**

Sekiru Adewale Adeyemi  
Anita Enaruna  
Patience Okon George

# OPINION

## A leader who delivers on his word

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

In Nigeria's political landscape, campaign promises are often made with ease but rarely sustained once power is secured. What begins as firm commitments during electioneering frequently fades under the weight of governance. Over time, citizens have grown accustomed to this pattern—one marked more by rhetoric than results. It is against this backdrop that Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, is carving out a different image—one anchored on action and follow-through, a style many now describe simply as “talk and do.”

That approach was on display in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area, where the governor commissioned the rebuilt Police Officers' Wives Association (POWA) Commercial Complex. Just months earlier, the same site lay in ruins after a devastating fire. Today, it stands restored—orderly, functional, and once again a hub of economic activity. What could have lingered as another unresolved public loss has instead become a case study in timely intervention.

The fire, which broke out on January 11, 2026, followed the restoration of electricity in the area. A spark from one of the shops quickly escalated into a blaze that swept through the complex within the Ekpoma Police Division, destroying over 25 shops. Traders lost goods worth millions of naira, wiping out livelihoods built over years. Although no lives were lost, the economic shock was immediate and severe.

In the aftermath, uncertainty gripped the affected traders. For many, the incident was more than a business setback—it disrupted daily survival. Small-scale commerce remains a primary source of income for countless households, and its sudden collapse carries ripple effects across health, education, and general welfare.

Governor Okpebholo's response was swift. He visited the scene shortly after the incident, inspected the damage, and engaged directly with victims. His message was clear: the complex would be rebuilt, and support would be provided. There were no grand declarations—just a firm commitment made under public scrutiny.

Four months later, that promise has been fulfilled.

At the commissioning, the governor reflected briefly on the events, pointing to the rebuilt structure as proof that government assurances can translate into tangible outcomes. Beyond restoring the facility, the administration also announced a N200 million relief package for affected traders. According to the governor, the funds will be distributed through a verified register to ensure transparency and fairness, enabling beneficiaries to re-



EDO STATE GOVERNOR, SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

stock and resume operations.

This combined intervention—reconstruction and financial support—addresses both the physical damage and the economic disruption caused by the fire. It signals a practical understanding of recovery: rebuilding structures alone is insufficient without enabling those affected to regain stability.

The Ekpoma project also offers insight into a broader governance pattern. Increasingly, the Okpebholo administration appears focused on completing projects within defined timelines—an approach that contrasts with the delays often associated with public works.

A similar trajectory is evident in Benin City, where reconstruction of the historic Oba Market is nearing completion. Once a symbol of prolonged delay after a fire incident, the market is now close to handover. The upgraded facility is expected to provide improved safety and modern amenities, with assurances that original occupants will return—addressing longstanding concerns over displacement.

Together, these projects reinforce

”  
*It signals a practical understanding of recovery: rebuilding structures alone is insufficient without enabling those affected to regain stability.*

a central principle: governance is ultimately measured by results. While policies and plans set direction, their credibility depends on execution. For citizens, especially those directly impacted, completed projects carry far greater significance than promises.

Beyond infrastructure, these efforts also contribute to rebuilding public trust. In an environment where skepticism toward government commitments runs deep, each fulfilled promise helps to restore confidence in leadership.

For traders in Ekpoma, the impact is immediate. The reopening of the POWA complex restores not just physical space, but economic opportunity. Shops are reopening, customers are returning, and income streams are gradually recovering. The financial support further eases the burden of starting over.

More broadly, the episode highlights the importance of responsive governance in times of crisis. The speed and effectiveness of intervention often determine how quickly communities rebound. In this case, the relatively short turnaround from

destruction to recovery sets a standard that will likely shape public expectations.

As Edo State advances its development agenda, the emphasis on delivery may prove decisive. Each completed project strengthens a growing record of performance, shaping both perception and legacy.

The sequence in Ekpoma is straightforward but instructive: a disaster occurred, a commitment was made, and within months, that commitment was honored. In a system where such outcomes are not always guaranteed, the significance is clear.

Ultimately, leadership is judged less by what is said and more by what is done. In Ekpoma, the evidence is visible—in rebuilt structures, revived businesses, and restored livelihoods. This is vintage Okpebholo—a governance approach redefining governance standards, demonstrating that in public service, promises and performance can still align.

• Dr Patrick Akhere Ebojele is the Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo