

# Edo enforces strict revenue compliance, bans direct collections by MDAs

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has directed all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to strictly comply with the State Revenue Administration Law, mandating that all revenue

collections be conducted exclusively through government-approved Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) accounts.

The directive, contained in a circular dated April 1, 2026, was addressed to heads of MDAs, including commissioners and permanent secretaries, auditors-gen-

eral at state and local government levels, Clerk of the Edo State House of Assembly, the Chief Registrar of the High Court of Justice, as well as chief executives of boards and parastatals.

The circular reaffirmed that the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) remains the sole

authority legally empowered to assess, collect and report all revenues accruing to the state, in line with Section 10(2) and Section 21(b) of the Edo State Revenue Administration Law, 2012.

Speaking at a meeting with heads of MDAs and permanent secretaries, the Executive Chair-

man of EIRS, Mr John Odior, outlined key compliance measures, stressing that all MDAs must immediately cease direct revenue collection and terminate the use of third-party agents for collecting taxes, levies or fees.

He also directed that taxpayers and business operators be

cautioned against making payments to unauthorised individuals or groups, insisting that all payments must be made into designated government-approved IGR accounts, while all other accounts currently in use

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# O The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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#200

## Cabinet reshuffle: Tinubu sacks 2 ministers, Oyedele takes over Finance Ministry

### As Defence Chief seeks new direction for Nigeria's peacekeeping missions

#### ABUJA

In a move that signals a fresh push to stabilise his administration, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu yesterday sacked two ministers from his cabinet and reassigned key portfolios in a minor reshuffle of the Federal Executive Council.

At the centre of the changes is the finance ministry, where Wale Edun has been directed

to step aside as Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy.

He will hand over to Taiwo Oyedele, who now steps up from his role as Minister of State to take full charge of the nation's economic management.

The decision, announced in Abuja by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume, reflects what officials describe as an effort to inject renewed energy into the

cabinet at a time of mounting economic expectations.

Akume, in a statement issued through his media aide, Yomi Odunuga, also confirmed changes in the housing sector.

Ahmed Dangiwa has been asked to vacate his position as Minister of Housing and Urban Development, paving the way for Muttaqha Darma, who has been named as minister-designate.

All affected ministers are expected to complete their hand-

over processes by the close of work on Thursday

Invoking his constitutional powers under Sections 147 and 148 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), Tinubu thanked the outgoing ministers for their service, but made it clear that adjustments within the cabinet would remain a continuing process.

Meanwhile, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, has called for a strategic shift in Nigeria's peacekeep-

ing engagements to ensure they deliver tangible national benefits beyond troop contributions.

Oluyede represented by the Chief of Training, Defence Headquarters, Rear Adm. Abolade Ogunleye, made the call at the opening of the 2026 Defence Headquarters Peacekeeping Operations Seminar on Tuesday in Abuja.

He said that Nigeria had remained a leading troop-contributing nation to missions under the United Nations and African

Union, but noted that the strategic returns had not matched the scale of its commitment.

"While these contributions have enhanced our international profile, the strategic returns, particularly in diplomatic influence, institutional positioning and national interest outcomes have not been commensurate," he said.

He described the seminar, themed "From Troop Contribution to Strategic Influence: Opti-

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#### DISU'S VISIT TO NSCDC:

Commandant-General, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Ahmed Audi (R), presenting a souvenir to IGP Olatunji Disu, during the latter's visit to NSCDC headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday in Abuja.

## Nat'l security: IGP calls for information sharing, unity

#### ABUJA

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Olatunji Disu, has called for strengthened information sharing and unity amongst security agencies to foster national security.

The IGP made the call during a courtesy visit to Ahmed Audi, Commandant General (CG) of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) on Tuesday in Abuja.

Disu said that there was a need for both security agencies to operate as a unified front to achieving lasting peace in Nigeria.

"We often fight difficult battles in demanding terrains, hence, we must encourage one another as we confront contemporary security challenges," the IGP said.

The IGP said that, because both agencies share the critical

mandate of providing national security, efforts must be aligned to enable effectiveness in combating insecurity across the country.

According to him, the visit was a deliberate step towards strengthening existing collaborations between both organisations.

In his response, NSCDC CG reassured the IGP of the corps' unwavering commitment to synergy.

Audi reiterated that the corps has a long-standing working relationship with the Nigerian Police Force and was ready to strengthen its partnership to meet evolving security needs.

He underscored that collaboration, cooperation, and coordination are the three pillars needed for conventional security agencies to succeed.

The NSCDC boss urged Nigerians to adopt a proactive stance by actively gathering and sharing intelligence reports with security forces.

NDLEA lauds court judgement on forfeiture of N33.6bn opioid

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Chad announces deployment of troops to Haiti to help tackle gangs

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2027 AFCON: CAF delegations storm Uganda, hold crucial meeting with hosts

# NDLEA lauds court judgement on forfeiture of N33.6bn opioid

## ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), has lauded the interim forfeiture order granted by the Federal High Court, Port Harcourt, on 17 containers of illicit opioids seized at Onne port.

The contents of the containers are put at about N33.6 billion combined street value.

This was contained in a statement by the Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Mr Femi Babafemi on Tuesday in Abuja.

Babafemi said that the Chairman of the agency, retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa, reacting to the court's order, described the forfeiture as a

death knell for the financial nerves of the criminal syndicates involved.

According to Marwa, this is not just a seizure; it is a total dispossession of the resources the drug cartels intended to use in destroying the lives of our youths and funding further criminality.

"By stripping the criminal syndicates of assets worth over N33.6billion, we have struck at the heart of their operations.

"This sends a clear message that the Nigerian state will not allow the proceeds of death to circulate to fund terrorism and other forms of criminality in our country."

The NDLEA chairman commended the Nigerian Judiciary for its steadfast support and

timely intervention in granting the interim forfeiture.

He noted that the partnership between the temple of justice and the agency was critical to winning the war against substance abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

He also commended the officers, men and women of NDLEA, particularly those attached to the Onne port

command, for their vigilance, professional integrity, and eagle-eyed scrutiny that led to the discovery of the concealed drugs.

He further acknowledged the vital role played by sister security agencies including the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and other port stakeholders whose cooperation ensured a seamless interdiction

process.

He further commended international partners for their continued intelligence sharing and technical support which he said remained a cornerstone of the agency's success.

According to him, the agency remains resolute in its mission to dismantle drug networks across the country.

The containers were inter-

cepted at the Port Harcourt Ports Complex in Onne, Rivers, on Sept. 4; Aug. 13 and 14; July 29; June 13; May 14, 19, 20, 28, 29, and 30, and April 29, 2025 respectively.

They containers were said to contain a staggering haul of 19.6million pills of Tramadol, Tafrodol, Tapentadol and Carisoprodol, as well over 2.49million bottles of Codeine Syrup.

## Reforms yielding gains at top, insecurity slowing impact — Kalu

### ABUJA

The Senator Orji Uzor Kalu has said that Nigeria's ongoing economic reforms are delivering positive outcomes at the macro level, but warned that insecurity and internal sabotage are slowing their impact on ordinary citizens.

Kalu, a former Governor of Abia State, made this known while speaking with members of the Senate Press Corps in Abuja during an interaction to mark his birthday on Tuesday.

He noted that while key economic indicators are improving and attracting increased interest from foreign investors across Asia, Europe and North America, the benefits are yet to fully trickle down to the grassroots.

"The upper end of the reform is working," he said, adding that insecurity remains a major factor undermining progress at lower levels of the economy.

"It is not because the President has not done what he is supposed to do, but because of insecurity and sabotage by some individuals," Kalu stated.

He expressed optimism that

the reforms introduced by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu would yield long-term benefits, emphasising that economic transformation is a gradual process.

Drawing comparisons with countries such as China and Singapore, Kalu said that Nigeria is still in the early stages of reform and urged citizens to exercise patience.

"Reforms do not happen in one day. These are processes that take time. Nigeria is on the path, and we will get there," he added.

Kalu also maintained that the administration had made progress in stabilising the economy, which he described as fragile when it assumed office in 2023.

He stressed that the success of the reforms would depend, not only on government policies, but also on improved security and collective national commitment.

His remarks come amid ongoing debates over the impact of the administration's economic policies, as Nigerians continue to grapple with rising living costs and persistent security challenges in parts of the country.

## Edo enforces strict revenue...

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for revenue collection must be discontinued.

According to him, all assessments and payments for services, renewals and licences must henceforth be processed through the Edo Revenue Administration System (ERAS).

Odiur warned that any official or individual found violating the directive would face sanctions in accordance with the law.

He, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the level of compliance since the issuance of the circular, stressing that full cooperation was non-negotiable for effective revenue tracking and the elimination of financial leakages.

The EIRS chairman also drew attention to provisions of the Nigeria Tax Administration Act, noting that Section 72(2) mandates all MDAs to demand a valid Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) from individuals seeking government services.

To improve ease of doing business, he announced plans to introduce a Consolidated Annual Demand Notice aimed at eliminating multiple taxes and levies, while providing a more transparent and simplified payment structure.

Odiur urged stakeholders to support the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, noting that strict revenue discipline is critical to delivering infrastructure and development across the state.



### A CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (left) receiving the Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, Edo State Branch, and members of his delegation at Government House, during a condolence visit to the Deputy governor over the death of his mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanru Idahosa.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH.

## Uwusan elders clarify leadership vacuum, appoint youth liaison, seek palace direction

### BENIN CITY

Elders of Uwusan Community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State have convened a meeting to address rising concerns over leadership structure in the community, particularly, the continued absence of a substantive Odionwere.

At the gathering, the elders categorically stated that Uwusan currently does not have an Odionwere, noting that no successor has been installed since the passing of the last recognised Odionwere, in line with the customs and tradi-

tional of Benin Kingdom.

They further clarified that, by extension, no Okaighele has been appointed in the community, stressing that tradition does not permit the installation of an Okaighele without a duly recognised Odionwere in place.

Speaking during the meeting, Pa Imafidon Aimiemeanuwu, the Ozukpkogieva of Uwusan, moved to dispel circulating rumours and misconceptions regarding the leadership structure.

He stated that at no time did he assume the position of Odionwere, nor did he appoint or

endorse anyone as Okaighele.

He, however, disclosed that the elders of Uwusan unanimously agreed to appoint Comrade Osaigbovo Ogbomo as a messenger and "eyes" of the elders, as well as to coordinate the youths of the community and ensure effective communication between the elders and younger population.

Also speaking, Pa Ezelekhoe Imadomwinyi, the Ozukpkogieva, alongside other elders, reaffirmed that Benin tradition does not accommodate the appointment of an Okaighele in the absence of an Odionwere.

Nonetheless, they stressed the need for proper coordination among the youths to maintain order and unity within the community.

To that end, the elders unanimously agreed that Comrade Ogbomo should serve as a liaison between the elders and the youths, effectively acting as a youth administrative head and channel of communication for community directives.

In a related development, Pa Monday Aigbokhian cautioned youths of the community against engaging in acts capable of disrupting the peace.

## Cabinet reshuffle: Tinubu sacks 2 ministers, Oyedele takes over...

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misising Peace Support Operations for National Interests," as timely.

He stressed the need to move from routine participation to leveraging peacekeeping as an instrument of national power and diplomacy.

According to him, the evolving global security landscape, characterised by complex mandates, asymmetric threats and rising geopolitical competition, demands a more coordinated and interest-driven approach.

"Nigeria must position itself not only as a contributor of troops

but as a strategic actor capable of shaping outcomes within multilateral security frameworks."

The CDS said his leadership philosophy for the Armed Forces of Nigeria was anchored on enhanced jointness, improved operational readiness, personnel welfare and sound administration, all geared towards safeguarding national sovereignty and supporting prosperity.

He expressed optimism that the seminar would generate actionable policy recommendations to strengthen inter-agency coordination and develop a coherent, interest-driven peace-

keeping strategy.

Earlier, the Director, Peace Support Operations, Defence Headquarters, Maj.-Gen. Uriah Opuene, described the seminar as a landmark initiative to reposition Nigeria's role in global peace missions.

Opuene said the event, the first of its kind at Defence Headquarters, was conceived as a strategic platform to critically assess Nigeria's participation in peace support operations.

He noted that though Nigeria had played prominent roles in global and regional peacekeeping, the diplomatic and institutional

gains had not always reflected the scale of its involvement.

"This is the maiden edition of this seminar; we have never had anything like this before.

"The seminar will stimulate informed discussions on how Nigeria can better leverage peacekeeping engagements for tangible national benefits while aligning them with broader objectives in defence, diplomacy and international positioning," he said.

Opuene added that the forum would feature research presentations, panel discus-

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# Security: Edo govt orders relocation of forest settlers

IDAHOSSA MUSA

**AGENEBODE**

The Edo State Government has directed farm settlers living in forested areas in Etsako East Local Government Area of the state to relocate to nearby towns and villages as part of efforts to strengthen security and enhance community accountability.

The Acting Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Area, Sunny Ekpetika Ekpeson, gave the directive while coordinating a security operation across major forest corridors in the council yesterday.

The exercise covered communities from Ivioghombe through Izotha and Edgbe along the railway axis, extending to Osholo, Emokwemhe and Upland-Iviogbe, as well as

Igiode and Uzanu—areas considered among the most volatile and bordering Kogi State.

Ekpeson said the measure is not aimed at disrupting legitimate farming activities but at ensuring residents operate within identifiable and secure community structures.

He noted that isolated settlements in dense forests create vulnerabilities that could be exploited by criminal elements.

“Our responsibility is to protect lives and property. Genuine farmers and residents are encouraged to integrate into recognised communities where there is proper oversight and collective security,” he said.

The operation involved personnel of the Nigerian Army, local security outfits and vigilante groups, who jointly combed the affected areas to reinforce security presence.

The chairman commended their professionalism and reaffirmed the council’s commitment to sustained peacekeeping efforts.

He assured residents that agriculture remains vital to the local economy and will continue to receive government support, stressing, however, that safety must take priority amid evolving security challenges.

Ekpeson also urged traditional rulers and community

leaders to strengthen vigilance and ensure responsible land administration, including proper profiling of settlers and visitors to enhance accountability.

He reiterated that Etsako East remains open to all law-abiding individuals, noting that the relocation directive is a proactive step to improve surveillance, promote transparency and build safer communities.

**MEDIA HUG WITH THE DG:**

L-R: Director of Technology Development, Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Mr Mohammed Njidda; Lead Consultant, Mr Abidemi Olanite; Deputy Director of Statistics, Dr Hamilton Chinwany; Director-General of RMRDC, Prof. Nnanyelugo Ike-Muonso; Director of Legal Services, RMRDC, Ms Nkozi Keshi; Consultant, Joe Oduahb and Director of Chemical and Pharmaceutical, RMRDC, Mr Abubakar, during the Media Hug with the Director-General of RMRDC and launch of the upgraded Integrated Raw Materials and Products Database System, Nigerian Information Statistical System for Raw Materials and Products (NISSRAMP), in Abuja on Tuesday.

## Abducted Delta LG chairman regains freedom after 11 days

BETTY IDALU

**WARRI**

The Chairman of Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State, Bright Abeke, has regained his freedom after 11 days in captivity.

A photograph that surfaced on Monday night showed the visibly relieved council boss alongside Jaro Egbo, Chairman of Ughelli North Local Government Area, lending credence to reports of his release.

Abeke was abducted at a hotel along Owumi Road in Sapele when armed men stormed the premises, fired sporadically, and injured a local vigilante operative as well as a member of his security detail before

whisking him away.

His release came hours after local government workers staged protests on Monday, criticising what they described as a slow pace in rescue efforts and urging security agencies to act decisively.

Although details surrounding the circumstances of his release remain unclear, security operatives led by the Delta State Police Command had reportedly intensified efforts to secure his freedom following the abduction.

As of the time of filing this report, the Police Public Relations Officer, Bright Edefe, had yet to issue an official statement, though further updates are expected as investigations continue.

## Bayelsa court sentences kidnappers to death by hanging

PHILP EKE

**YENAGOA**

Bayelsa State High Court has sentenced two men to death by hanging for the abduction of Mrs Grace Omietimi, mother of the Chief Medical Director of the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa, Dr James Omietimi.

The convicts, Felix Oburu and Anthony Kio Eligwe, were found guilty of kidnapping the victim and holding her in

captivity for weeks before her eventual release.

The court heard that the two men conspired with other accomplices, who are still at large, to execute the crime.

Oburu is from Omoku Community in Ogba/Egbema Local Government Area, while Eligwe hails from Oyigba Community in Ahoada West Local Government Area, both in Rivers State.

According to court proceedings, Mrs Omietimi was abducted on September 17, 2017,

and taken to Oyigba Community, where she was held for several weeks until her family paid a ransom for her release.

The suspects were later apprehended by operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) following intelligence-led operations that tracked their movements.

Delivering judgment, the Chief Judge of Bayelsa State, Justice Matilda A. Ayemieye, upheld the prosecution’s case and found the defendants guilty as charged, subsequently sentencing both men to death by hanging.

During the trial, Mrs Omie-

timi testified, giving a detailed account of her ordeal in captivity.

She identified the second defendant, Eligwe, as the person in whose residence she was held throughout the period.

Her testimony was corroborated by the Investigating Officer from the DSS Bayelsa State Command, who explained how the suspects were traced and arrested.

The judgment brings closure to a case that has lingered for years and reinforces the judiciary’s stance against kidnapping and related crimes.

## Flyover construction turns Effurun road into bustling market

VICTOR AJUNWA

**EFFURUN**

The ongoing construction of the Enerhen Junction Flyover Bridge has triggered an unexpected economic shift in Effurun, Uvwie Local Government Area, as a temporarily closed road has evolved into a thriving roadside market.

The closure of the community road for the multi-billion naira project has led residents to convert the stretch into a busy commercial hub, with makeshift stalls lining both sides of the road down to MCC junction.

Findings indicate that the market emerged shortly after construction began, quickly attracting traders and buyers.

A visit to the area revealed intense commercial activity, with brisk trading taking place throughout the day.

One trader, Madam Martha Okporuane, who sells fresh tomatoes and peppers, expressed satisfaction with the development, noting that the market now rivals other major markets across Uvwie, Warri South, and Udu Local Government Areas.

Another trader, a smoked fish seller identified simply as Mama Kevwe, said a wide range of food items is available, adding that trading often continues late into the night.

Also speaking, a resident, Mr Christopher Akpodiete, described the market as a welcome development, particularly for single individuals, noting that shoppers can still purchase items as late as 9 p.m.

A young female resident, who preferred anonymity, corroborated the view, saying that many people, especially those active in the evenings depend heavily on the market for daily needs.

## Illegal crude exports ravage N'Delta, threaten economy —Report

BETTY IDALU

**WARRI**

Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta is facing a deepening crisis as illegal crude export operations on the high seas continue to erode national revenue and worsen environmental degradation, a report has warned.

The Joint Committee on Petroleum Resources was alerted to the scale of the threat following a submission by Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited, which detailed the mechanics of the illicit trade.

According to the report, stolen crude oil is transferred from sacks into wooden boats and ferried to offshore vessels

without adherence to safety standards, often resulting in spills that contaminate marine ecosystems.

The document noted that such activities compound decades of environmental damage caused by both legitimate oil operations and criminal enterprises in the region.

It further highlighted the complexity of maritime oil theft, stressing that it requires more sophisticated enforcement strategies than land-based pipeline vandalism.

Tantita disclosed that its marine patrols have adopted specialised tactics, including the use of high-speed interceptor boats, night-vision equipment, and intelligence networks.

In one operation presented to lawmakers, Tantita operatives reportedly spent weeks tracking a highly active illegal jetty.

The mission, carried out in collaboration with naval forces, led to the seizure of thousands of litres of stolen crude and the arrest of several suspects.

However, the report noted that criminal syndicates often rebuild dismantled facilities quickly, posing persistent enforcement challenges.

The testimony also exposed the international dimension of the trade, revealing that vessels receiving stolen crude are frequently registered in countries with weak maritime regulations, with ownership concealed through complex

corporate structures.

Lawmakers were told that this complicates enforcement efforts, which are largely limited to Nigerian waters.

Despite these hurdles, the report expressed optimism that sustained interdictions and the destruction of illegal jetties have disrupted several networks, reducing their operational efficiency and profitability.

The committee also raised concerns about the broader implications for Nigeria’s position in the global oil market, warning that the steady flow of discounted, illegally sourced crude could undermine the credibility and competitiveness of the country’s exports if not urgently addressed.

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sions and interactive sessions aimed at generating practical, actionable recommendations.

He expressed confidence that the seminar would produce meaningful solutions to strengthen Nigeria’s strategic influence globally, while appreciating the CDS and stakeholders for their continued support.

“These outcomes will guide efforts to enhance Nigeria’s role

in multilateral peace and security frameworks and position the country as a leading and influential peacekeeping nation in Africa,” he said.

**CHARGE OF NAME**

I, formally known as **UAHU ESTHER**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UMARU GRACE MASANG**, also my correct date of birth is **01/12/1978**, not **01/12/1979** as wrongly written on my BVN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

**NEWS**

# FG to arraign alleged coup plotters over treason, terrorism charges

**ABUJA**

The Federal Government will on Wednesday arraign a group of suspected coup plotters before the Federal High Court in Abuja on a 13-count charge bordering on treason, terrorism, and related offences.

The prosecution, instituted through the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation, is to be heard before Jus-

tice Joyce Abdulmalik.

The charge, marked FHC/ABJ/CR/206/2026, was filed on April 20 by the Director of Public Prosecutions of the Federation, Rotimi Oyedepo, SAN.

Those listed as defendants include retired Major-General Mohammed Ibrahim Gana, retired Captain (Nigerian Navy) Erasmus Ochegobia Victor, Inspector Ahmed Ibrahim, Zekeri Umoru, Bukar Kashim Gonyi, and Abdulkadir Sani.

A former Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Timipre Sylva, is also named

in the charge but is currently at large.

According to the charge, the defendants are accused of conspiring in 2025 to undermine the Nigerian state and allegedly plotting to levy war against the country in a bid to overawe the President.

The alleged offence is punishable under Section 37(2) of the Criminal Code.

The prosecution further alleged that the defendants had prior knowledge of a planned treasonable act involving one Colonel Mohammed Alhassan Ma'aji and others but failed to disclose such intelligence to the appropriate authorities.

The charge states that the

accused, "knowing that and intended to commit treason, did not give the information thereof with all reasonable despatch to either the President or a Peace Officer."

It also accuses them of failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the commission of the alleged offence.

In addition to treason-related counts, the Federal Government is prosecuting the defendants under the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022, alleging that they conspired to commit acts of terrorism within Nigeria.

Inspector Ahmed Ibrahim and Zekeri Umoru are specifically accused of participating

in meetings linked to terrorist activities, allegedly in furtherance of a political ideology capable of destabilising the constitutional structure of the country.

The charge also alleges that the defendants provided material support for terrorism and deliberately suppressed intelligence that could have prevented such acts.

Financial transactions linked to terrorism financing also form part of the charges. Bukar Goni is accused of retaining N50 million believed to be proceeds of unlawful activity, while Abdulkadir Sani allegedly held N2 million from similar sources.

Zekeri Umoru is accused of accepting N10 million in cash outside the formal financial system and retaining an additional N8.8 million suspected to be proceeds of terrorism financing. Inspector Ahmed Ibrahim is also alleged to have taken possession of N1 million connected to the scheme.

All financial-related offences were filed under the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

The Federal Government described the case as involving a coordinated network of security personnel, civilians, and a politically exposed individual allegedly linked to activities threatening national security.

## Court threatens jail term for lawyers in EFCC forfeiture suit against Malami

**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday warned that it would not hesitate to jail any lawyer found culpable of breaching court procedures or deliberately stalling proceedings in the ongoing forfeiture case filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) against 57 properties linked to former Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, SAN.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik issued the stern warning after EFCC lead counsel, Jibrin Okutepe, SAN, complained that some lawyers representing interested parties were serving court processes late, thereby delaying the hearing.

When the matter was called, the judge also declined to allow lawyers whose names were

not on the official cause list to announce appearances, condemning what she described as procedural abuse.

Okutepe told the court that although the matter was scheduled for hearing of all pending applications, several respondents had continued to serve him fresh processes as late as the morning of the proceedings.

He said some processes filed as far back as January were only served on the prosecution in April, describing the situation as a deliberate attempt to frustrate the case.

According to him, about 14 lawyers had served processes late, while another counsel attempted to serve additional documents in open court.

"We are ministers in the temple of justice, my lord, and things should be done rightly," Okutepe said, urging the court to give clear direction.

## Stakeholders urge JAMB to support WAEC, NECO on planned CBT transition

**ENUGU**

Education stakeholders have called on the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to support the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) as they prepare to adopt Computer-Based Testing (CBT) for their examinations.

The call was made by Dr Moses Ifeanyiyeze, Principal of Union Secondary School, Awkunanaw, Enugu, during an interaction with journalists at a CBT centre hosting the ongoing Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

Ifeanyiyeze, who is also an Anglican Venerable, said both WAEC and NECO could benefit significantly from JAMB's experience, noting that the board has consistently improved its CBT processes over the years.

He suggested that the examination bodies leverage JAMB's infrastructure and scheduling system to efficiently manage large numbers of candidates.

According to him, JAMB has addressed key challenges such as power supply disruptions, impersonation, and examination malpractice through sustained innovation and experience.

He added that the CBT format allows candidates offering similar subjects to sit together without compromising the integrity of the examination.

Commenting on the ongoing UTME, the principal described the exercise as smooth and well-organised, with robust security arrangements involving personnel from the police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Department of State Services (DSS).

He explained that candidates undergo multiple verification processes before gaining access to examination halls, including gate screening and online slip validation.

Ifeanyiyeze also noted positive feedback from candidates, who reportedly experienced no power failures or technical glitches during the examination.

**PROTEST:**

Chairman, Obeagu Ugwuaji Town Union Caretaker Committee, Com. Joseph Okwudili-Anih (12th L) with some members of the community, during a protest against alleged fraudulent land transactions by the former President-General, Mr Freedom Chinonso-Obi in Obeagu Ugwuaji Community in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State on Tuesday.

## Eribo declares for Egor/Ikpoba-Okha Reps seat, gets APC endorsement

**BENIN CITY**

A former two-term Chairman of Egor Local Government Council, Hon. Crosby Eribo, has formally declared his intention to contest the Egor/Ikpoba-Okha Federal Constituency seat in the House of Representatives.

Eribo, who is seeking the ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC), made his intention known during a meeting with party leaders, stating that his ambition is driven by a desire to provide effective and quality representation for the

constituency, which he said has lagged in that regard.

He pledged that, if elected, he would pursue purposeful legislation aimed at attracting sustainable growth and development to the area.

According to him, this would be achieved through active collaboration with the leadership of the House of Representatives to advance good governance in the constituency.

Reflecting on his tenure as council chairman, Eribo noted that he maximised limited resources to improve the lives of residents, adding that his

achievements remain difficult for his successors to surpass.

He also recalled his previous attempt to serve at the state level, stating that he and his colleagues were denied the opportunity to be sworn in as members of the Edo State House of Assembly during the administration of former Governor Godwin Obaseki, despite being duly elected.

Appealing to party leaders for their support, Eribo assured that he would deploy his experience to enact laws that would drive rapid development and transformation in the constituency.

He identified youth and women empowerment, educa-

tion, healthcare, and infrastructure development as priority areas, adding that he would work closely with the state government and other stakeholders to deliver on these goals.

Eribo also promised to operate an open-door policy, ensuring accessibility and responsiveness to constituents' concerns.

He said his constituency office would serve as a hub for engagement and problem-solving.

Leaders of the APC in Egor Local Government Area, including ward chairmen, unit heads, youth and women representatives, unanimously endorsed his candidacy, citing his track record and commitment to grassroots development.

## MRA flags ambiguities in NBC's pre-election broadcast guidelines

**LAGOS**

The Media Rights Agenda (MRA) has raised concerns over what it describes as ambiguous provisions in the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) pre-election guidelines issued ahead of the 2027 General Elections.

While commending the NBC for providing timely guidance aimed at promoting professionalism, ethical conduct, and compliance with

broadcasting standards, the organisation warned that certain provisions could undermine freedom of expression and media independence.

In a statement on Tuesday, MRA Executive Director, Ede-taen Ojo, acknowledged that the commission's intervention was necessary to curb misinformation, hate speech, and incitement capable of destabilising democratic processes and social cohesion.

However, he expressed concern over directives requiring

broadcasters to ensure that presenters do not express personal opinions in programmes, as stipulated in Section 1.10.3 of the Broadcasting Code.

Ojo argued that while professionalism and impartiality are essential, a blanket restriction on opinions could weaken critical analysis, commentary, and other editorial formats that are vital to democratic discourse.

He noted that such provisions may conflict with the right to freedom of expression

guaranteed under Section 39 of the Constitution and relevant international instruments.

The MRA further contended that restrictions on opinions should be limited to news bulletins rather than extended to all forms of programming.

The organisation also questioned the practicality of the rule requiring that all sides to an issue be equitably presented within the same broadcast, warning that it could constrain editorial judgment and programming flexibility.

# NGA sets legal reform agenda to unlock Nigeria's gas potential

**LAGOS**

The Nigerian Gas Association (NGA) has outlined a reform agenda focused on investment, regulatory certainty and energy transition to strengthen Nigeria's legal framework and unlock its vast gas potential.

The President of the associa-

tion, Mr Akachukwu Nwokedi, disclosed this in a statement issued on Tuesday in Lagos, noting that the initiative places legal and policy frameworks at the centre of Nigeria's gas development strategy.

Nwokedi said the forum, themed 'Strengthening Nigeria's Gas Legal Framework for a Low-Carbon, Commercially

Viable Future,' marked a pivotal moment by convening legal experts, policymakers, regulators and industry executives for a focused, solutions-driven dialogue.

According to him, Nigeria's next phase of gas sector growth depends largely on the strength, clarity and credibility of its legal and regulatory environment.

"Nigeria's gas resources present a defining opportunity for economic transformation. However, realising this potential re-

quires a legal framework that is transparent, predictable and globally competitive," he said.

He noted that deliberations at the forum converged on a central message that the country's opportunity now lies in effective execution.

While acknowledging that the Petroleum Industry Act provides a transformative foundation, Nwokedi stressed that its full impact depends on disciplined implementation, regulatory coherence and institutional alignment.

He added that eliminating ambiguity and strengthening enforcement were critical to attracting sustained investment.

"As global energy systems evolve, stakeholders reaffirmed natural gas as Nigeria's strategic bridge for growth, energy security and emissions reduction," he said.

Nwokedi further stated that legal systems must move beyond policy intentions to incorporate clear, enforceable standards on carbon management, environmental, social and governance (ESG) obligations, and sustainability.

Participants at the forum highlighted the need for robust commercial and contractual frameworks across the gas value chain, noting that enhanced contractual clarity, efficient

dispute resolution and a predictable fiscal regime are essential to de-risk investments and accelerate project delivery.

He acknowledged President Bola Tinubu's policy direction in advancing gas development through infrastructure expansion and increased domestic utilisation, adding that sustained policy stability would send strong signals to both domestic and international investors.

Beyond technical outcomes, Nwokedi said the NGA Legal Forum was a step towards bridging gaps between legal frameworks and operational realities.

"The successful debut of the forum signals its emergence as a cornerstone institution for shaping Nigeria's gas sector," he said.

**CONDOLENCE VISIT:**

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (right), listening to Engr. Abubakar Momoh, Minister of Regional Development, during a condolence visit over the passing of his (Idahosa) mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

## Nigerian scholar wins U.S. teaching award, leads human-robot innovation

Nigerian scholar, Habeeb Abdulrauf, has gained international recognition after receiving a prestigious United States teaching award and leading a high-impact workshop on human-robot interaction at the 2026 convention of the Central States Communication Association (CSCA).

Abdulrauf was named the 2026 recipient of the CSCA President Pamela J. Cooper Graduate Teaching Award at the master's level, one of the association's most competitive honours for excellence in graduate instruction.

The award was presented

during the CSCA Annual Conference held from April 14 to April 19 at the Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a major gathering of communication scholars and educators across the United States.

At the conference, Abdulrauf chaired a session titled "Emerging Tech Tools Showcase: Teaching Smarter, Researching Faster," where he led a practical workshop on innovations in human-robot interaction and AI-driven research tools.

The session featured contributions from Shalewa Babatayo of the University of Central Florida and Chidalu Glory Nnorukah of Western Mich-

igan University, who demonstrated tools such as NotebookLM, ResearchRabbit and Elicit for advancing scholarly research and promoting inclusive, student-centred teaching.

Abdulrauf also presented a hands-on demonstration of Peerbots, an open-source robot-puppeteering platform that enables researchers to design and test human-AI and human-robot interaction experiments without advanced programming skills.

The session highlighted how smartphones mounted on low-cost 3D-printed casings can function as interactive robotic systems, allowing researchers

to prototype experiments using cost-effective methods.

"This approach lowers the barrier to entry for conducting human-robot interaction studies and allows researchers to focus on testing concepts before investing in full system development," Abdulrauf said.

Reacting to the achievement, Cynthia Klekar-Cunningham, Director of the School of Communication at Western Michigan University, commended Abdulrauf's contributions.

"Abdulrauf consistently demonstrates excellence in both teaching and innovation, and we are proud of how he represents and elevates the School of Communication on national and international stages," she said.

## Flood alert: LAWMA intensifies preparedness measures

**LAGOS**

The Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) has intensified measures to mitigate flooding across the state as the rainy season approaches.

The Managing Director of LAWMA, Dr Muyiwa Gbadegehin, disclosed this in an interview with journalists on Tuesday in Lagos.

Gbadegehin said the agency had stepped up pre-rainy season waste evacuation, particularly in flood-prone and densely populated areas, to prevent blockage of drainage channels.

He noted that enforcement against indiscriminate dumping of refuse in drains, canals and road medians was ongoing to ensure the free flow of stormwater.

He added that the resurfacing of internal roads at the Olusosun landfill had been approved to improve access and sustain seamless waste evacua-

tion during heavy rains.

According to him, personnel and equipment are being strategically deployed to markets, highways and flood-prone corridors for rapid response.

Gbadegehin also said monitoring of Private Sector Participants (PSP) operators had been strengthened to ensure timely waste collection at household and commercial levels.

He explained that LAWMA was enhancing operations at Transfer Loading Stations and Material Recovery Facilities to reduce pressure on landfills and improve turnaround time.

He said public sensitisation campaigns were ongoing in collaboration with the News Agency of Nigeria, the National Orientation Agency and other stakeholders.

Gbadegehin added that support was being provided for the reintroduced monthly environmental sanitation exercise to promote community compliance and cleaner surroundings.

## Amaechi seeks increased investment in agric to boost food security

**ABUJA**

Former Minister of Transport, Mr Rotimi Amaechi, has called for increased investment in agriculture to ensure food security and tackle insecurity in Nigeria.

Amaechi, a former Governor of Rivers State, made the call during a visit to the Maraba Ga'ate Settlement Farm Estate in Nasarawa State on Tuesday.

He emphasised the need to transition from traditional, low-yield farming methods to modern, mechanised agriculture to enhance productivity, reduce dependence on imports and create jobs.

"The best way to fight insecurity in the country is to invest in agriculture," he said.

Amaechi expressed satisfaction with the operations at the

farm and pledged to invest in the sector, noting his intention to replicate initiatives similar to the Songhai farms established during his tenure as governor.

Also speaking, the Sarkin Yakin Ga'ate and Managing Director of the Nigeria Farmers' Group and Cooperative Society (NFGCS) Farm Estate, Mr Retson Tedheke, said the project aims to create a farming community capable of ensuring national food security.

He advocated what he described as "economic democracy," which he said would empower Nigerians to be productive and contribute to development.

"We do not need to import food to feed our people. If we strengthen our economy, insecurity will reduce significantly," he said.

## Troops arrest 3 suspects with 314 rounds of ammunition in Kogi

**LOKOJA**

Troops of the 12 Brigade of the Nigerian Army have disrupted a terrorist logistics network in Kogi State, arresting three suspected armed couriers and recovering 314 rounds of ammunition.

The Brigade's spokesperson, Lt. Hassan Abdullahi, disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday in Lokoja, noting that the arrests followed two separate operations.

He said the breakthroughs

were part of a three-month intelligence-driven crackdown on terrorist supply chains within the brigade's area of responsibility.

According to him, in the first operation on March 29, troops along the Jamata-Owara Road in Lokoja Local Government Area intercepted a suspected courier riding a motorcycle fitted with a concealed compartment for transporting ammunition.

Preliminary findings, he said, linked the suspect to known

terrorist elements, prompting follow-up operations.

Abdullahi added that the second operation was carried out on April 20 following credible intelligence on the movement of logistics operatives.

He said troops at Response Area Oshokoshoko mounted a snap checkpoint along the Obajana-Kabba Road and intercepted a Toyota bus travelling from Makurdi, leading to the arrest of two additional suspects.

A search of the vehicle, he

said, uncovered a sack containing 314 rounds of 7.62mm (Special) ammunition and three AK-47 rifle magazines concealed behind the driver's seat.

Other items recovered include two mobile phones, a driver's licence, a National Identification Number (NIN) slip and an identification card.

The suspects and recovered items have been handed over to the 12 Military Intelligence Regiment for further investigation.

**NEWS**

# Ibrahim presents credentials to UN chief, begins role as Nigeria's envoy

**NEW YORK**

Nigeria's newly appointed Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr Jimoh Ibrahim, has formally presented his letters of credence to UN Secretary-General António Gu-

terres, marking the official commencement of his diplomatic duties.

The ceremony took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on Monday.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its spokesperson, Mr Kimiebi Ebienua, confirmed

the development, describing it as a significant milestone in Nigeria's diplomatic engagement at the global level.

With the presentation, Ibrahim is now fully accredited to represent Nigeria at the United Nations, where he is expected to articulate the country's positions on key international issues and participate in multi-lateral negotiations.

A letter of credence, typically issued by a country's head of

state, serves as formal authorisation for an ambassador to represent their nation abroad and is a prerequisite for assuming official duties.

Ibrahim's appointment was announced in March 2026 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as part of a broader deployment of 65 ambassadors to Nigerian missions worldwide, comprising both career diplomats and political appointees.

Other notable postings in-

clude Femi Fani-Kayode to Germany, Isaac Adewole to Canada and Olufemi Pedro to Australia.

Before his appointment, Ibrahim represented Ondo South Senatorial District in the National Assembly, following his election in 2023.

His nomination came after the Senate confirmed ambassadorial nominees in December 2025.

As Permanent Representa-

tive, he will serve as Nigeria's chief envoy at the UN, engaging with member states and the Secretary-General on issues such as global peace and security, economic development and international cooperation.

According to Ebienua, the presentation of credentials signifies the completion of all formal diplomatic requirements.

"He has presented his letters, and it simply means he has started working," he said.

## I-G restructures Police Monitoring Unit, appoints new head

**ABUJA**

The Inspector-General of Police, Mr Olatunji Disu, has approved the restructuring of the Police Monitoring Unit to enhance operational effectiveness and reinforce discipline within the Nigeria Police Force.

The Force Public Relations Officer, DCP Anthony Placid, disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja.

He said the restructuring forms part of ongoing institutional reforms aimed at refocusing the unit on its core mandate.

According to him, the reorganisation has streamlined and strengthened the unit to improve proactive monitoring, intelligence-driven inspections and real-time oversight of police personnel and operations across commands, formations

and departments.

"The restructured framework also harmonises key investigative and monitoring functions in line with the force's reform agenda," he said.

Placid noted that the reform is designed to entrench professionalism, discipline and transparency, adding that the unit would play a central role in identifying operational lapses, enforcing standards and ensuring accountability.

He further announced a leadership transition, with Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr Aliyu Abubakar, appointed as Head of the Police Monitoring Team.

Abubakar previously served as DCP in charge of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in both the Federal Capital Territory and Rivers Command.

**PRESENTATION OF LETTERS OF CREDENCE:**

R-L: Presentation of Letters of Credence by His Excellency, Jimoh Ibrahim, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, at the UN Secretariat, New York, on Monday.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

## Abia, NRC partner on new Umuahia train station project

**UMUAHIA**

The Abia State Government said it has reached an advanced stage of discussions with the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) for the construction of a new train station in Umuahia.

The Commissioner for Information, Mr Okey Kanu, disclosed this while briefing journalists on the outcome of the State Executive Council meeting.

He said the proposed station would be located adjacent to the Umuahia Central Bus Terminal and would feature an integrated urban rail corridor with commercial and retail components to boost economic activities.

Kanu added that access roads would be constructed to improve connectivity to the station and surrounding communities.

He said the government, through the Umuahia Capital Development Authority (UCDA), had intensified efforts to relocate traders from the Isi-Gate area to the newly developed Relief Market in Afara.

According to him, compensation has been fully paid to affected landowners, while perimeter fencing of the new site is ongoing.

Kanu further disclosed that the Umuahia Central Bus Terminal had been completed and was ready for commissioning, along-

side supporting infrastructure for the Umuahia Green Bus Service Scheme, including charging stations, ticketing points, bus shelters and junction improvements.

He expressed optimism that the projects would position Umuahia among leading cities with modern public transport systems.

He also said the Greater Aba Development Authority (GADA) had completed several projects, including roads and a new daily market, ready for inauguration.

Kanu announced that the state government, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Housing, had concluded arrangements for the groundbreaking of a Federal Housing Authority estate in Umuahia.

He said the ceremony would take place on Tuesday at the project site along the Umuahia-Uzuakoli Road, adding that the initiative aims to expand access to affordable housing and promote sustainable urban development.

Police Deny Unlawful Detention, Killing in Enugu, Dismiss Viral Video as Fake

Enugu — The Police Command in Enugu State has debunked a viral social media video alleging unlawful detention and killing of suspects in the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Unit, describing it as false and misleading.

## UniJos dismisses Dalung's claims against Amupitan as false

**JOS**

The University of Jos has dismissed as "totally false, unfounded and baseless" allegations by former Minister of Sports, Solomon Dalung, against Prof. Joash Amupitan, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The university, through the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Prof. Francis Kwede, said Dalung's claims questioning Amupitan's

credibility were aimed at tarnishing his integrity.

"Dalung's aim is to smear the integrity of Amupitan; his outburst came as a surprise to us," Kwede told reporters in Jos.

Dalung had accused Amupitan of corruption and sharp practices during his tenure as Dean of the Law Faculty, alleging that he lacked the integrity to deliver credible elections in 2027.

However, Kwede refuted the allegations, describing them as

unfounded and without basis.

He specifically addressed claims that Amupitan manipulated the results of 16 students who graduated with Second Class Upper Degrees in the 2009/2010 LL.B class.

"We can state categorically that nothing of such ever happened in that class or any other before or after it, to the best of our knowledge as members of the Faculty Board," he said.

Kwede explained that, upon assuming office in 2008, Amupitan introduced the use of Excel spreadsheets for compiling results, replacing manual processes

and reducing delays and errors.

He said the innovation improved efficiency and enabled final-year students to meet the Nigerian Law School schedule, adding that the initiative was widely commended within the university.

The dean maintained that Amupitan conducted himself with "the highest honour, candour and integrity" throughout his service.

He urged the public to disregard Dalung's allegations, describing them as a product of "wild politics" intended to damage reputations.

## Troops destroy bandits' enclaves in Bauchi, neutralise scores

**BAUCHI**

Troops of the Nigerian Army have neutralised scores of bandits and destroyed their enclaves in coordinated operations across parts of Bauchi State, Governor Bala Mohammed said.

The governor disclosed this while briefing journalists after a closed-door security meeting in Bauchi, noting that the operations were carried out in collaboration with the Police, other security agencies and local vigilantes.

He said the offensive targeted bandits' strongholds in the Dajin Malam Forest, which links

Bauchi, Plateau and Taraba states.

According to him, troops destroyed several camps and motorcycles, disrupted supply routes and forced many of the criminals to flee under sustained pressure.

"Four warplanes bombed the bandits' camps, successfully clearing several enclaves and disrupting criminal activities within the forests," Mohammed said, adding that many bandits were neutralised.

He noted that the destruction of motorcycles had significantly reduced the mobility and operational capacity of the criminals.

The governor also announced a temporary surrender window

for bandits willing to lay down their arms, stressing that the initiative was not amnesty but an opportunity for reintegration under government supervision.

"We are calling on those still hiding to surrender within this period to consolidate recent security gains," he said.

Mohammed disclosed that plans were underway to relocate surrendered bandits and their families, noting that many were not indigenes of the state.

He further announced plans for biometric data capture of residents in affected communities, in collaboration with the National Identity Management

Commission (NIMC) and other agencies, to enhance monitoring and prevent the emergence of ungoverned spaces.

The state, he said, would also strengthen surveillance systems and community-based security through support for vigilantes.

The governor commended President Bola Tinubu for what he described as prompt and decisive action against banditry, and lauded the military for consolidating gains and preventing re-infiltration.

He urged residents to remain vigilant and cooperate with security agencies to sustain peace and stability.

**JUDICIARY****NEWS**

# Ex-AGF trial: Witness admits signing Idris' statement at EFCC custody

**ABUJA**

Retired Director of Legal Services in the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, Mr Haruna Alabi, on Tuesday told an Abuja High Court that he signed a statement made by former Accountant-General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, as a witness on May 17, 2022.

Alabi made the admission while testifying in a trial-within-trial ordered by the court to determine the admissibility of statements attributed to Idris.

The proceedings before Justice Halilu Yusuf followed an objection by Idris' counsel, Chris Uche, SAN, who argued that the statements sought to be tendered by the prosecution on November 23, 2022, were

obtained through deception and inducement.

Idris is standing trial alongside Geoffrey Akindele, Mohammed Usman, and Gezawa Commodity Market and Exchange Limited over the alleged diversion of public funds amounting to N109.5 billion.

The defendants have, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

During his testimony, Alabi identified his name and signature on the statement marked Exhibit B3, said to have been

made by Idris on May 17, 2022.

Under cross-examination by prosecuting counsel, Oluwalake Atolagbe, the witness told the court that he visited Idris at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) headquarters on the said date in the company of other directors.

When asked whether Idris was still serving as Accountant-General at the time, Alabi responded that he was already in EFCC custody.

Explaining the purpose of the visit, the witness said it was

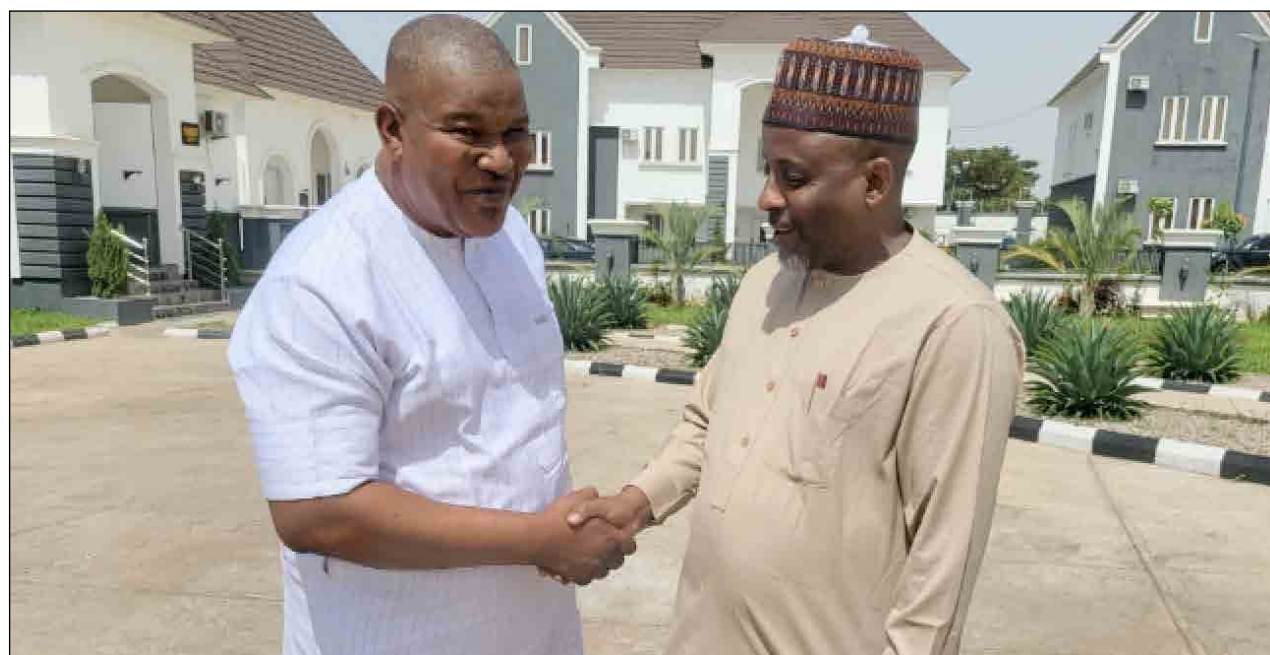
to show empathy to their former superior.

"I wrote my name and signed on the back of the first defendant's statement of May 17, 2022, and did not sign anywhere else," he said.

However, when asked whether Idris personally wrote the statement, Alabi said he could not confirm.

Following the witness's testimony, defence counsel requested an adjournment to enable the presentation of additional witnesses.

Justice Yusuf directed the defence to produce all its witnesses at the next sitting and adjourned the matter until June 24 for continuation of the trial-within-trial.

**NIPR CONFERENCE:**

President, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Comrade Alhassan Yahya (right) with Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Information and Strategy, Mr Lanre Bajulaiye, at the NIPR Conference in Kaduna on Tuesday.

## Trial of Kogi Gov's aide stalled over change of counsel

**ABUJA**

The trial of Ali Bello, Chief of Staff to Kogi State Governor Usman Ododo, and his co-defendant, Dauda Sulaiman, was on Tuesday stalled at the Federal High Court in Abuja following the appearance of a new defence counsel.

The case, which was slated for continuation before Justice

James Omotosho, could not proceed after Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Ahmed Raji, announced his appearance for Bello and requested time to study the case file.

Raji urged the court to grant an adjournment in the interest of fair hearing and justice.

However, counsel to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Director of Public Prosecutions of the Federation, Rotimi Oyedepo, SAN, opposed the request, arguing that it was a tactic to delay proceedings.

After hearing both sides, Justice Omotosho adjourned the matter until May 5 and May 6 for continuation of trial.

The EFCC is prosecuting Bello and Sulaiman on a 16-count charge bordering on alleged misappropriation and money laundering involving N10.27 billion.

Bello, who is a nephew of former Kogi State Governor Yahaya Bello, is accused of committing the offences during the latter's administration.

The anti-graft agency alleged that the defendants diverted funds belonging to the Kogi State Government and concealed large sums of money through a Bureau de Change operator, Rabiu Musa Tafada,

## Court remands 31yr-old man for assault in Badagry

**BADAGRY (LAGOS)**

Badagry Chief Magistrate's Court on Tuesday ordered the remand of a 31-year-old man, Bolu Anasa, in a correctional facility after he pleaded guilty to assault.

Chief Magistrate Nurudeen Layeni ordered that the de-

endant be remanded until May 13 for review of facts and sentencing.

Earlier, the prosecutor, ASP Edet Ekpo, told the court that the offence was committed on April 6 at about 10:00 a.m. at No. 1, MayKem Povita, Badagry.

He alleged that the defendant unlawfully entered the room of the complainant,

Omoge Taiwo, wearing a face mask and armed with a cutlass, with intent to commit a felony.

According to the prosecution, the defendant assaulted the complainant by beating her and inflicting injuries.

Ekpo further stated that the defendant was found in possession of a cutlass for which he could not provide a satis-

factory explanation and that his conduct caused a breach of peace and public panic.

He added that the defendant was subsequently arrested and handed over to the police for prosecution.

The offences contravene Sections 168, 173, 308, and 329 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

## 2 security guards docked over alleged theft of employer's property

**ABUJA**

Two security guards, Saidu Salihu and Salihu Dudu, were on Tuesday arraigned before a Life Camp Chief Magistrate's Court in Abuja over the alleged theft of building materials belonging to their employer.

Salihu, 65, and Dudu, 18,

both residents of Mpape, Abuja, are facing charges of criminal conspiracy and theft by servant. They pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Mrs Charity Nwachukwu, told the court that the complaint was lodged by Mr Okoi Wofai at the Life Camp Police Station on March 9.

She alleged that the defendants, alongside one Umar who

is at large, were employed as security guards but dishonestly made away with items including a Geepee tank valued at N280,000, five bags of cement worth N57,500, P.O.P cement valued at N99,000, and unspecified quantities of tiles.

The total value of the stolen items was estimated at N436,500. According to the prosecu-

tion, the items were sold to one Kan-giwa, also at large, as well as to scavengers.

She added that although the defendants made confessional statements during investigation, efforts to recover the stolen items were unsuccessful.

The offences contravene Sections 97 and 289 of the Penal Code.

## Appeal Court affirms death sentence for armed robbery convict

**AWKA**

The Court of Appeal sitting in Awka has upheld the conviction and death sentence of Chizoba Ede for armed robbery, affirming the judgment of an Anambra State High Court.

In its earlier ruling delivered on June 15, 2022, the trial court, presided over by Justice Victoria Nwoye, found Ede guilty and sentenced him to death by hanging.

The prosecution had told the court that Ede, alongside four accomplices armed with firearms and other dangerous weapons, attacked a victim along Upper Iweka, Onitsha.

During the attack, the victim sustained severe injuries, including stab wounds and damage to his hand, and was dispossessed

of money and valuables.

The court heard that the victim later raised an alarm after spotting the suspects fleeing in a vehicle, prompting intervention from passersby and local vigilante operatives, which led to Ede's arrest while others escaped.

Following his arrest, Ede reportedly made confessional statements and led investigators to the gang's hideout, where only the victim's identity card was recovered.

Dissatisfied with the judgment, the convict appealed on grounds of inadequate legal representation and improper evaluation of evidence.

However, the appellate court dismissed the appeal, holding that the trial court properly assessed the evidence and that the appellant's right to fair hearing was not violated.

## Court discharges actress Angela Okorie, strikes out defamation case

**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday discharged Nollywood actress Angela Okorie and struck out the defamation charge filed against her by the police.

Justice Emeka Nwite struck out the case after counsel for the prosecution, Victor Okoye, informed the court of a directive to withdraw the charge following an amicable resolution between the parties.

Okoye said the withdrawal was made pursuant to Section 108 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015.

Counsel to the defendant, Emerie Onyemelukwe, did not oppose the application.

The case originated from a petition filed by fellow actress Mercy Johnson-Okogie, which led to the filing of charges by the Inspector-General of Police over alleged cyberbullying.

Okorie had earlier been granted bail in the sum of N5 million on January 30 following her re-arrestment on a seven-count charge bordering on cybercrimes.

She was accused of conspiring with one Ifeoma Mbonu, said to be at large, to engage in cyberstalking and defamation through posts on Instagram and TikTok.

## Mechanic arraigned over alleged N2.7m fraud in Badagry

**BADAGRY (LAGOS)**

A 40-year-old mechanic, Ikechukwu Madu, was on Tuesday arraigned before a Badagry Chief Magistrate's Court over an alleged N2.7 million fraud.

Madu is facing a two-count charge of fraud and stealing but pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, ASP Edet Ekpo, told the court that the defendant committed the offences on January 20 at about 8:00 p.m. in the Ajara Torikoh area of Badagry.

He alleged that the defendant collected N2.7 million from

a complainant, Mr Awegnonde Bidossessi, under the pretext of repairing his Range Rover but failed to carry out the repairs.

According to the prosecution, the defendant instead converted the money to personal use.

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

Chief Magistrate Nurudeen Layeni granted the defendant bail in the sum of N500,000 with three sureties in like sum, one of whom must be a company director.

The case was adjourned until May 7 for mention.

**NEWS****Foreign**

## Zelensky says failure of US envoys to visit Kyiv is 'disrespectful'

President Volodymyr Zelensky has said he considered visits by US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Moscow but not Kyiv "disrespectful".

The pair visited the Russian capital late last year as ceasefire talks aimed at ending the war in Ukraine gained pace, and again in January.

Witkoff, who has been to Moscow eight times, met Vladimir Putin on many occasions.

Neither he nor Kushner, however, has ever visited Kyiv in an official capacity.

"It's disrespectful [for them] to come to Moscow and not Kyiv, it's just disrespectful," Zelensky said in an interview with a Ukrainian outlet.

"I understand we have complex logistics... If they don't want to, we can meet in other

countries," he added.

Witkoff, a former real estate magnate, is Donald Trump's special envoy and Kushner is the US president's son-in-law.

Earlier in April Zelensky said the two were planning on visiting Ukraine, but that trip never materialised amid the US-Israel war with Iran.

The last trilateral summit between Russia, the US and Ukraine was in mid-February.

Less than two weeks later, the US and Israel began striking Iran and attention switched away from ending the Ukraine war, which has been raging for more than four years.

Witkoff and Kushner are part of the US negotiating team travelling to Pakistan for ceasefire talks with Iran, and Zelensky acknowledged that the attention of the US was on the Middle East.

"But... in any case, for us it is important to continue cooperating with the Americans," he added.

Ceasefire talks gained pace in autumn 2025, when it emerged that Russian and US officials had been working on a plan to end the war in Ukraine that appeared to include several terms unfavourable to Kyiv.

Ukraine pushed to be involved in the talks, and several meetings and summits ensued.

By February, both Moscow and Kyiv said they had reached an agreement on some "military issues", including the location of the front line and ceasefire monitoring.

Other issues remain unresolved, including Ukraine's demand that Russia returns the Ukrainian children it forcibly deported since the start of the war, and Moscow's insistence

on a "regime change" in Kyiv.

But the key matter is the status of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. Moscow's demand for sovereign Ukrainian territory in exchange for an end to the war is unacceptable to Kyiv, and neither side is willing to budge - leaving the talks at a dead-end.

"We are looking for a compromise between two completely polar positions," said Kyrylo Budanov, Zelensky's chief of staff, in February. "We have not yet found it."

In the end, he added, both Kyiv and Moscow will "have to acknowledge one of two things: either we find a solution and end this war, or we all equally take responsibility for admitting that we didn't find a solution and continue to kill one another - something we do quite efficiently and professionally."

## Canadian killed in shooting at Mexico's ancient Teotihuacán pyramids

A 32-year-old Canadian woman has been killed and 13 people injured after a man opened fire at a historical site in Mexico, according to Mexican officials. The gunman killed himself after the attack.

President Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico has expressed her solidarity with the victims of a shooting at one of the country's most important tourist destinations, the ancient pyramid complex of Teotihuacán.

It comes with seven weeks to go before the first match of the Fifa World Cup is held in Mexico City.

"There was a big push and panic of everybody running at the same time to get out," a British couple told the BBC, describing chaotic scenes amid the sound of gunfire.

Local prosecutors identified the shooter as Julio César Jasso Ramírez, a Mexican national, without providing further details in a post on X.

In a separate post, the Mexican government's security cabinet said 13 people, whose ages range from six to 61, had been treated in hospital after being injured in the incident.

The pre-Hispanic pyramids and ruins at Teotihuacán are a Unesco World Heritage Site and among the most popular tourist attractions in the country.

Police recovered a firearm, a bladed weapon, and live cartridges at the scene. Sheinbaum said she was following

updates and was in touch with the Canadian embassy.

She wrote on social media that she had instructed her security cabinet to investigate the incident and provide all necessary support.

"What happened today in Teotihuacán deeply pains us. I express my most sincere solidarity with the affected individuals and their families," she wrote in Spanish.

Canada's foreign minister, Anita Anand, confirmed a Canadian was killed and another wounded in the incident. She said Canadian consular officials were providing assistance.

The BBC has contacted the Canadian government for more information.

State Security Secretary Cristóbal Castañeda Camarillo told reporters on Monday that two Colombians, a Russian and a Canadian were among those injured.

According to a witness who spoke to Reuters news agency, a young boy was shot in the leg during the attack, which they said began at about 11:00 local time on Monday.

They added that the gunman was on the temple's mezzanine and appeared to fire most shots into the air, while carrying a digital tablet and shouting.

In Mexico on holiday, a British couple from London, who did not want to be named, were taking a photo of the Pyramid of the Sun when they saw people start running towards them and shouting about a gunman.



**ZELENSKY AND WITKOFF:**

US envoy Steve Witkoff (right) has travelled to Moscow eight times but never to Kyiv

## Trump says US will not lift Hormuz blockade until deal made with Iran

The US will not lift its blockade on Iranian ports until a deal has been reached with Tehran, US President Donald Trump has said, amid continuing uncertainty over whether fresh talks to end the war will take place.

The blockade, which began a week ago, is "absolutely destroying Iran", Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social, adding his country was winning the conflict "by a lot".

His comments come with the temporary US-Iran ceasefire set to end on Wednesday, but with no certainty over whether a second round of peace talks will go ahead in Pakistan.

There is tightened security in Pakistan's capital in anticipation of a meeting. But US

Vice President JD Vance - set to lead the US delegation - has not yet left Washington, while Iran says it has not decided whether to attend.

Since the blockade began, US forces have directed 27 vessels to turn around or return to an Iranian port, according to US Central Command (Centcom).

The US also intercepted and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship for the first time in the conflict, after it tried to get through the blockade on Sunday.

Videos shared by Centcom were said to show the ship being warned before troops abseiled onto the vessel.

Tehran deemed it an "act of piracy" and a violation of the fragile ceasefire between the two countries.

Iran has maintained its own blockade on the Strait of Hor-

muz, a key shipping route, for nearly two months - causing global energy prices to soar.

It was briefly re-opened on Saturday but quickly closed again, following reports of vessels in or near the strait, including a tanker, being targeted by Tehran.

Trump said Iran had "decided to fire bullets" and called it a "total violation" to the ceasefire agreement.

Iran said it would keep the route shut until the US stopped the blockade of its ports.

There are indications a second round of peace talks between the US and Iran will go ahead, despite Tehran refusing to confirm whether it will send a delegation.

Following the first round of talks earlier this month US Vice-President J D Vance said the US "could not get to a sit-

uation where the Iranians were willing to accept our terms", and Iran's foreign ministry urged Washington to refrain from "excessive demands and unlawful requests".

The potential second round comes at a crucial moment. Sources told the BBC on Monday afternoon that the US delegation would be leaving "soon" but did not specify a time, while officials told the New York Times that they would depart on Tuesday.

Later on Monday, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson said that, "so far", Tehran had "no plans" to attend.

Vance is expected to be joined by special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner, as in the previous round of talks.

## Unprecedented ruling finds Hungary's anti-LGBTQ laws in breach of EU values

The European Union's top court has ruled that Hungarian anti-LGBTQ laws violate EU rules and infringe its values of equality and minority rights.

The laws were brought in by Viktor Orbán's government in 2021 and banned so-called promotion of homosexuality or gender change to under-18s, arguing it violated child protection laws.

The European Court of Justice ruled that the Orbán reforms breached EU rules on a number of levels, and significantly that it also broke the founding values of Article 2 of the EU Treaty - an unprecedented finding.

The ruling comes nine days after Hungarians voted to end Orbán's 16-year era of continuous rule.

The ECJ ruled that the Hungarian law interfered with rights such as a ban on discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation, respect for private and family life and freedom of expression and information.

The law also stigmatised and marginalised people who were transgender or not heterosexual and associated them with people convicted of paedophilia, the court found.

The Hungarian law was

"contrary to the very identity of the Union as a common legal order in a society in which pluralism prevails", it ruled.

John Morijn, professor of law and politics in international relations at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, said the Court's ruling was historic in its symbolism, in that it meant the rights of a group in society could not be negotiated away.

"You cannot equate what is totally natural - that 10% of the population loves the same sex - with egregious crime," he told the BBC.

Orbán's Fidesz party was able to push through the legislation with the help of a supermajority - with control of two-thirds of parliament.

Last year, it passed a further amendment that enabled a ban on public events involving the LGBTQ community such as Budapest's popular Pride march, which went ahead despite the ban, prompting prosecutors to file charges against Mayor Gergely Karácsony.

The European Commission said the anti-LGBTQ law would be one of the issues it would be taking up with the new government once it was in place.

**Foreign****NEWS****Chad announces deployment of troops to Haiti to help tackle gangs**

As gang violence continues to plague Haiti, Chad is doing what it can to help. Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Deby announced his country will send 1,500 troops to Haiti as part of the UN-backed security force.

"The state will contribute to this force with two battalions of 750 personnel each, for a total of 1,500 men," Deby said.

Deby stated that Chad frequently participated in international coalitions and peace-keeping endeavours, citing operations against the militant group Boko Haram.

Launched three years ago, the Gang Suppression Force is

a multinational security force that aims to help Haitian police tackle gangs.

It replaced a previous multinational mission headed by Kenya, and seeks to increase numbers to 5,500 security personnel.

Haiti has been in the grips of gang violence for years, with the population facing killings, rapes and kidnappings.

Gangs control almost all of the capital Port-au-Prince, and have expanded their reach beyond the city over the course of the past year.

The violence has also worsened humanitarian conditions in Haiti, which is the poorest country in the Americas.

**JAPAN PRIME MINISTER:**

Japan's eight decades of pacifism looks to be dismantling since Sanae Takaichi became Prime Minister in October 2025.

**Nigeria charges six people with treason over Independence Day coup plot**

Six people in Nigeria, including a retired major general and a serving police inspector, have been charged with treason for attempting to overthrow President Bola Tinubu in a coup last year.

The charges were filed by the Attorney General at the Federal High Court in the capital, Abuja, where the defendants are due to appear before Justice Joyce Abdulmalik on Wednesday.

A seventh person - a former governor and one-time oil minister, Timipre Sylva - was also named but the court documents said he was still at large.

Rumours of the coup plot first surfaced in October 2025 when the government abruptly cancelled a planned military parade to mark Nigeria's 65th Independence Anniversary.

At the time, officials cited security threats - but speculation quickly linked the cancellation to a possible coup plot.

The military denied the suggestion, but in January it announced that 16 officers were to be tried before a military court for attempting to oust the president.

It is unclear whether the charges filed in the Federal High Court, which also include terrorism and money laundering, are in addition to the military prosecutions.

Those named in the Attorney General's case are:

Mohammed Ibrahim Gana, a retired major general, Erasmus Ochegobia Victor, a retired navy captain,

Ahmed Ibrahim, a police inspector, Zekeri Umoru, an electrician working at the Presidential Villa, Bukar Kashim Goni, a civilian and Abdulkadir Sani, an Islamic cleric.

According to the charge sheet, the six defendants, who have yet to comment on the allegations, "conspired with one

another to levy war against the state to overawe" the president.

The court papers suggest that coup plot was led by Col Mohammed Alhassan Ma'aji, who was arrested along with other accomplices.

Prosecutors also allege the defendants had prior knowledge of the Col Ma'aji's "treasonable act", but failed to inform authorities.

The charges include the suppression of intelligence, with prosecutors alleging the defendants were intent on destabilising the state and failed to disclose information that could have helped prevent terrorism.

Money-laundering allegations form a significant part of the case - with accusations that money changed hands linked to the financing of terrorism.

Under Nigerian law, treason is one of the most serious criminal offences and can attract severe penalties, including life imprisonment.

Nigeria has experienced a period of unbroken civilian rule since 1999. The armed forces have consistently stressed their loyalty to civilian authority, often issuing public statements reaffirming their commitment to democracy.

**Japan loosens arms export rules in break from post-WW2 pacifism**

Japan has relaxed decades-old restrictions on its arms exports, clearing the way for it to sell weapons to more than a dozen countries.

The announcement on Tuesday marks a milestone in Tokyo's shift away from the pacifism that has characterised its post-war defence policy. It also comes at a time of heightened tensions in the region.

Restrictions that limit arms exports to just five categories - rescue, transport, warning, surveillance and minesweeping - will be lifted.

This means Japan can now sell lethal weapons to the 17 countries with which it has defence agreements, including the US and the UK.

A ban on arms sales to countries involved in conflict will stay, although it does not cover those that have defence pacts with Japan. Authorities in Tokyo say they will allow for exceptions "in special circumstances".

"In an increasingly severe security environment, no single country can now protect its own peace and security alone," Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi wrote on X on Tuesday.

However, she also said there was "absolutely no change in our commitment to upholding the path and fundamental principles we have followed as a peace-loving nation for over 80 years since the war".

"Under the new system, we will strategically promote equipment transfers while making even more rigorous and cautious judgments on whether transfers are permissible," she wrote.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said in a press briefing that the move was "intended to safeguard Japan's security and further contribute to the peace and stability of the region".

China has said it is "seriously concerned" about what it described as Japan's "reckless militarisation".

"China will remain highly vigilant and resolutely opposed [to the move]," Beijing's foreign ministry said in a routine media briefing on Tuesday.

The new arms export rules were announced as Japan's Self-Defence Forces took part in annual war games between the US and the Philippines. Japan is joining the war games

as combatants for the first time, instead of mere observers.

China has opposed the drills, claiming that it would deepen divisions in the region. The exercises take place in parts of the Philippines that are near waters and islands claimed by Beijing, including Taiwan.

China sees self-ruled Taiwan as a breakaway province that will eventually be under Beijing's control - and has not ruled out the use of force to take the island.

Last year, Takaichi drew Beijing's ire after she suggested in parliament that Japan could respond with its Self-Defence Force if Beijing attacked Taiwan.

South Korea's foreign ministry said Japan's defence policy "should ideally be carried out in a manner that upholds the spirit of the Peace Constitution while contributing to peace and stability in the region".

South Korea was colonised by Japan from 1910 until the end of World War Two. Japanese soldiers forced hundreds of thousands of Koreans to work in its mines and factories. Women were pushed into sexual slavery.

Eight decades of pacifism

Japan's defence posture was written into its post-World War Two constitution in 1947. It renounced war as a way to settle international disputes and stated that Japan will never maintain war potential.

For decades, pacifism has become part of Japan's identity. But that mindset has been shifting gradually.

In 2014, then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe relaxed a blanket ban on all military sales, allowing to jointly develop arms with allies and give its defence industry access to new markets and technology.

In 2023, then Prime Minister Fumio Kishida took a step further to allow exports of finished lethal weapons for the first time since World War Two.

Takaichi has supported revising the pacifist constitution. While she has not specified the proposed changes, many think it will involve amending Article 9, which renounces war.

Takaichi's supporters say Japan needs to face a new reality where old rules no longer apply for a country that sits surrounded by China, Russia, and North Korea.

**South Africa's police boss charged in connection with controversial health contract**

South Africa's police chief has been formally charged with failing in his duties to provide proper oversight in his role following a health contract that has become the subject of a criminal investigation.

General Fannie Masemola, 62, was summoned to court over his alleged part in the awarding of a controversial \$21m (£15.5m) tender, which has since been cancelled.

He has been charged with violating part of South Africa's Public Finance Management Act, which governs how public finances are managed. The case

comes amidst a national inquiry examining allegedly widespread corruption involving police officers and politicians.

Masemola told journalists after the hearing that he denied the charges.

"I know that I'm not guilty, I'm not wrong, but the [law] must take its course," he said after his brief appearance at the Pretoria Magistrate's Court.

The court case relates to a tender awarded to controversial businessman Vusumuzi "Cat" Matlala's company Medicare24 Tshwane District in 2024, which was meant to provide health

services to the police.

It was cancelled a year later, in May 2025, and since then a dozen senior police officers have been formally charged over their role in the awarding of the contract.

They have been accused of colluding with Matlala, who has also been charged with corruption. None of them have yet been asked to plead in court.

Masemola, who was also not asked to enter a plea, is the only who has not been charged with corruption. He faces four counts of breaching the public finances act.

These charges fall under

section 38 of the law, which outlines the responsibilities of accounting officers. Masemola, as the police's accounting officer, has been accused of failing in his duties.

His case has been postponed until 13 May when Masemola will join the 16 others, including senior police officers and Matlala, in the case.

The allegations of how Matlala got the contract were made at an inquiry, known as the Madlanga Commission, set up by President Cyril Ramaphosa last September to look into corruption in the police force.

Masemola is the third police chief to face a criminal investigation while in office.

Jackie Selebi, the country's longest-serving police boss, was sentenced in 2010 to 15 years in prison after being convicted of taking bribes from an Italian drug lord, Glen Agliotti, in exchange for turning a blind eye to his criminal activity.

In 2017, Khomotso Phahlane was charged with corruption. Those charges were withdrawn the next year, but he was again arrested on similar charges in 2019 - which he denies. The case is still in court.



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# FEATURES

## DEBT, DEMOGRAPHY, AND DISILLUSIONMENT:

# The global youth unemployment time bomb

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

The world is getting younger and broker at the same time.

By 2026, 1.2 billion people aged 15–24 are trying to enter the global workforce. Two-thirds live in developing countries. Africa alone adds 12 million young people to the labour market every year. Nigeria adds 3.5 million.

At the same time, global public debt crossed \$97 trillion in 2025. Advanced economies are aging and borrowing to fund pensions. Developing economies are young and borrowing to fund interest. The IMF calls it “high-debt, low-growth”. The streets call it “no jobs, no future”.

Youth unemployment is not a labour statistic. It is a political fuse. In 2011, it lit the Arab Spring. In 2020, it lit #EndSARS. In 2026, it is lit across three continents, and governments are out of fire extinguishers.

### THE NUMBERS: A CONTINENT OF APPLICANTS

Nigeria's official unemployment rate was re-based to 5.3% in 2024. The new methodology counts anyone who worked one hour in a week as employed. It counts a university graduate selling airtime as “gainfully engaged”.

The real number is underemployment. The NBS's own Q4 2023 data showed youth unemployment/underemployment at 53.4% for ages 15–34. That is 40+ million Nigerians. The World Bank's 2026 estimate is worse: 7 million Nigerians enter the labour force annually, while the formal economy creates fewer than 500,000 jobs.

Globally, the ILO reports 73 million young people unemployed in 2025, and 289 million not in employment, education, or training — NEET. India has 200 million NEETs. Egypt has 35% youth unemployment. Spain and Italy are above 25%. South Africa is at 61%.

This is not a recession blip. It is structural. The global economy grew 3.1% in 2025. Corporate profits hit records. AI productivity jumped. And youth unemployment stayed stuck. Growth is decoupling from jobs. Capital is decoupling from labour.

### THE DEBT TRAP: WHY STATES CAN'T SPEND THEIR WAY OUT

The old Keynesian fix was simple: when the private sector won't hire, government spends. Build roads, hire teachers, fund apprenticeships.

In 2026, governments cannot. Nigeria's N68.3 trillion budget commits 80–90% of revenue to debt service. Ghana defaulted in 2022 and is still restructuring. Kenya's 2024 tax protests forced a budget retreat. Egypt spends 45% of revenue on interest. Pakistan is in its 24th IMF program.

Debt service is now the largest ministry in most developing countries. It has no staff, no projects, and no voters. But it gets paid first.

So when 3.5 million Nigerians turn 18 each year, the state cannot hire them. It cannot even train them. The Universal Basic Education Commission is underfunded. Federal technical colleges have no power. The NYSC stipend buys half a bag of rice.

The social contract was: “Stay in school, get a job.” The contract is broken. Debt service took the pen.

## COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



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As of June 2025  
 Source: Trading Economics



So when 3.5 million Nigerians turn 18 each year, the state cannot hire them. It cannot even train them. The Universal Basic Education Commission is underfunded. Federal technical colleges have no power. The NYSC stipend buys half a bag of rice.



people. But 774 LGAs can each create 5,000 jobs if they work. Revive Ehor Water Works and hire 200. Fix 10 rural roads per LGA and hire 500. Run primary health centres 24/7 and hire 300. That is 774,000 jobs, funded by cutting “security votes” and overheads. The money exists. It is just stolen.

Tax Assets, Not Labour: Nigeria taxes salaries and SMEs. It barely taxes wealth, property, or idle land. A 1% annual tax on urban plots above N100 million funds 2 million apprenticeships. Stop taxing the poor to service debt. Tax the idle rich to create work.

Industrial Power First: No country industrialised with N250/kWh diesel. Pick 10 industrial clusters — Nnewi, Aba, Kano, Agbara, Calabar — and give them 20-hour power at N80/kWh. Gas, hydro, solar, whatever works. Publish uptime. Firms will hire. AI won't stop them if the lights are on.

The world will not wait for Nigeria's youth. If the state cannot use them, others will: criminal gangs, insurgents, traffickers, or foreign recruiters. A 17-year-old with no job and no hope is a policy failure today and a security crisis tomorrow.

Debt can be restructured. Demography cannot. By 2030, 42% of the world's youth will be African. By 2050, 1 in 4 humans will be African.

They will be employed, or they will be enraged. There is no third option.

In 2026, Nigeria must choose whether the naira's floor and the debt ceiling matter more than the youth outside the gate. Because that youth is not asking for a palliative. He is asking for a future.

And if we cannot give it, he will take it.

### THE AI ACCELERATOR: PRODUCTIVITY WITHOUT PEOPLE

Into this gap walks AI. In 2024–2026, generative AI moved from novelty to operations. Banks use it for customer service. Telcos use it for network optimization. State governments use it for tax fraud detection. Lagos touts “smart city” dashboards.

Every CEO interview says the same thing: “AI will not replace people. It will make people more productive.” What they mean is: “We will need fewer people.”

Entry-level jobs are the first to go. Legal research, coding grunt work, graphic design, call centers, basic accounting — all exposed. Those were the ladders. A polytechnic graduate in Benin used to start at a bank processing forms. That form is now a bot. The ladder is gone.

Daron Acemoglu's 2024 research is blunt: unless AI creates new tasks faster than it automates old ones, it widens inequality. So far, it is not creating new tasks for young Nigerians. It is creating new margins for firms in California.

Nigeria wants “AI adoption in governance” while 53.4% of youth are underemployed. You cannot automate a job that does not exist. You can only automate the hope of getting one.

### THE MIGRATION VALVE: JAPA AS POLICY

When states cannot create jobs and debt blocks spending, the release valve

is migration.

Nigeria lost 3,679 medical doctors to the UK in 2022–2023 alone. Canada's Express Entry took 15,000 Nigerians in 2024. Germany's skilled worker visa is recruiting welders from Edo State. The US student visa route is a one-way ticket for most.

“Japa” is now policy by default. Families sell land to fund IELTS and flights. States lose nurses, teachers, and engineers. The economy loses taxpayers and innovators.

But migration is a valve, not a solution. The UK, Canada, and EU are tightening rules in 2025–2026. Anti-immigrant politics is rising. The door is closing. And the demographic wave is still coming.

What happens when 12 million Africans join the labour force each year and the EU takes 200,000? The rest stay. Angry. Organised. Online.

### THE POLITICAL PRICE: DISILLUSIONMENT AS IDEOLOGY

Unemployed youth are not passive. They are political.

In Kenya, the 2024 Finance Bill protests were led by Gen Z. No party, no structure, just TikTok and anger. They stormed parliament. The bill died. The president retreated.

In Nigeria, #EndSARS in 2020 was a youth revolt against police brutality. The deeper driver was economic

hopelessness. When Lekki toll gate closed, so did the belief that the state would protect or provide.

In 2026, the triggers are everywhere: a 25% MPR that kills SME loans, food inflation that makes garri a luxury, and a new tax law that feels like extortion without services. The opposition does not need a manifesto. It needs a meme.

Disillusionment is now an ideology. It says: “The system is rigged. The elders failed. The debt is not mine.” It votes for chaos, or it refuses to vote at all. Both break states.

The Sahel juntas are young. The bandit commanders are young. The average age in Nigeria's House of Reps is 47. The average age in the country is 17. That gap is not sustainable.

### FOUR WAYS TO DEFUSE THE BOMB

You cannot tweet jobs into existence. You cannot borrow your way out of a demographic wave. But you can stop making it worse.

Kill the Certificate Lie: Nigeria's education system produces graduates for a 1980 economy. 60% of courses have no labour market link. Shut half the universities. Fund 1,000 technical colleges with power, tools, and instructors who've worked in industry. Pay trainees. A certified welder at 19 is better than a unemployed sociologist at 24.

Decentralise Work: The Federal Government cannot hire 40 million

# The Naira's New Floor: Why FX stability Without productivity is a ceiling

IBE UCHEGBU

By April 2026, the naira has found something it has not had in years: a floor. After multiple devaluations, FX backlogs cleared, and a CBN policy rate that finally bit, the official rate has hovered between ₦1,350–₦1,420/\$1 for two quarters.

Government officials call it stability. Importers call it breathable. Households call it relief after 2024's ₦1,900/\$1 panic.

But a floor is not a foundation. If Nigeria's FX market is stable only because demand is crushed and supply is borrowed, then we have not fixed the house. We have just stopped it from sinking further. The ceiling on growth is still the same: we do not produce enough of what we consume, or earn enough of what we import.

2026 will test whether this stability is the start of reform, or the end of it.

How We Got Here is that "The Three Levers" the naira's new floor rests on has been pulled hard since mid-2024.

**Rate Hikes:** CBN's Monetary Policy Rate above 25% made naira assets painful to short and attractive to hold. Treasury bills at 22–24% pulled portfolio flows. Inflation slowed, but credit to manufacturers choked.

**Backlog Clearance:** The CBN cleared verified FX forwards and OTC backlogs. Airlines repatriated trapped funds. Foreign investors saw exits, not just entries. That restored confidence, but drained reserves.

**Import Compression:** Petrol subsidy



removal, higher tariffs, and weak consumer purchasing power crushed import demand. Nigeria imported less because Nigerians could afford less. That is not a productivity gain. It is a welfare loss.

With those three, the naira stopped falling. But none of them is a factory. None drills oil. None harvests a grain.

## THE PRODUCTIVITY GAP: WHAT WE STILL DON'T EARN

Oil production remains below

1.4mbpd versus a 1.8mbpd OPEC quota. Theft, underinvestment, and ageing fields persist. Non-oil exports are up on paper — cashew, cocoa, sesame — but ports still delay, standards still fail, and value-add is minimal.

Manufacturers report power at ₦250/kWh from diesel, logistics eating 30% of cost, and FX for raw materials still rationed. The result: factories run at 40–55% capacity. They cannot compete with imports even at

₦1,400/\$1, let alone export.

Agriculture faces insecurity in food belts. Benue, Kaduna, and Niger farms are contested or abandoned. Banditry on transport routes means food travels with armed escorts, if at all. The inflation we tamed at the port returns at the farm gate.

So the naira is stable, but the trade balance is stable because we buy less, not because we sell more. That is a ceiling.

## THE DEBT QUESTION: STABILITY AT WHAT COST?

Reserves are not just oil. They are also Eurobond proceeds, IMF disbursements, and swaps. Nigeria's public debt crossed ₦90 trillion in 2025. Debt service takes 80–90% of retained revenue.

When FX stability depends on borrowed dollars, every basis point the US Fed adds is a tax on Nigeria. When stability depends on high rates, every quarter above 25% MPR is a tax on SMEs.

BusinessDay's warning on the 2026 budget applies to FX: we risk a "fiscal time-loop". The FX version is similar: Borrow dollars to stabilise the naira → use stable naira to pay for imports and debt → fail to raise export earnings because the real economy is strangled → borrow more dollars.

The floor holds. The roof caves in. The Human Cost: Stable Rate, Unstable Lives

For the trader in Aba, ₦1,400/\$1 is better than ₦1,900/\$1. But if her shop rent, school fees, and food still rise 60% in two years while sales volumes fall, stability is academic.

For the IDP in Gwoza, FX stability means nothing if the clinic has no drugs and the borehole is broken. For the graduate in Ekiti, a stable naira does not create a job if no factory is hiring.

FX is not the economy. It is the thermometer. We cooled the fever, but we have not cured the infection. Celebrating the temperature without treating the patient is how countries relapse.

## The Sahel's shadow: How Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso's exit from ECOWAS reshapes Nigeria's security

MUHAMMED IBN UMAR

In January 2024, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso announced they were quitting ECOWAS. By 2026, the divorce is complete. The three juntas formed the Alliance of Sahel States, AES, with a joint military force, shared currency plans, and a clear message: West Africa's old security order is dead.

Nigeria shares a 1,608km border with Niger. Bandits already use that border as a logistics corridor. Boko Haram factions trade weapons and fighters across it. Now the legal framework that allowed joint patrols, intelligence sharing, and hot pursuit is gone.

Abuja spent 2023 threatening intervention in Niger. By 2026, Abuja is building trenches. The Sahel's shadow has lengthened, and it falls squarely on Nigeria's North. This is the foreign policy issue that will shape Nigeria's 2026 budget, 2027 election, and every LGA security vote in between.

One may wish to ask how "The Breakup" happened and Why ECOWAS Lost the Sahel

ECOWAS sanctions after the Niger coup in July 2023 were meant to be decisive. Border closures, no-fly zones, frozen assets. The assumption was that landlocked Niger could not survive isolation.

The assumption was wrong. Sanctions hurt civilians, not juntas. They pushed Niger toward Mali, Burkina

Faso, and Russia. Wagner became African Corps. French troops left. UN peacekeepers left. The AES announced a 5,000-man joint force in 2025 and began talking about a common passport and central bank.

ECOWAS lifted sanctions in February 2024 to stop the bleed, but the three states left anyway. The lesson for Nigeria: regional hegemony without economic pull is just geography. When ECOWAS could not guarantee trade, power, or security, the Sahel found new patrons.

Nigeria led the intervention talk, then backed down. That reversal cost credibility. The AES now sees Nigeria as a loud neighbor, not a leader. That perception has consequences when weapons cross at Illela.

## THERE IS THE BORDER REALITY: 1,608km of Exposure

Nigeria's border with Niger runs through Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, and Borno. It is mostly ungoverned, poorly marked, and economically intertwined. Communities on both sides share markets, language, and families.

Since 2023, that border has been a sieve. Arms from Libya flow down. Motorcycles for bandits move up. ISWAP treats the Lake Chad Basin as one theatre. JAS moves between Borno and Diffa. Bandit kingpins in Zamfara buy weapons in markets that source from Mali.

When Niger was in ECOWAS, Nige-

ria could request cross-border pursuit, share ISR, and coordinate with MN-JTF Sector 4 in Diffa. Post-exit, those mechanisms are dead or downgraded. Nigerian forces now prioritize regime survival, not Nigerian requests. AES joint operations do not include Nigeria.

**THE RESULT:** Nigeria's Northwest and Northeast are now the frontline of a Sahel insurgency that no longer pretends to respect borders. The 2026 budget of ₦68.3 trillion will spend more on internal operations than it did in 2023, because the external buffer is gone.

The Russian Factor is also an issue. New Guns, Old Problems.

The AES turn to Russia is not ideological. It is transactional. Wagner/African Corps provides regime security, training, and disinformation against Western powers. They do not do development. They do not build power plants. They do not secure 1,608km of someone else's border.

Russia's playbook is familiar: protect the capital, control mines, and let the periphery burn. That is now Nigeria's problem. As the AES states contract security to external mercenaries, ungoverned spaces expand. Those spaces export fighters, weapons, and displaced persons.

Nigeria already hosts 3.6 million IDPs and 400,000+ refugees. If Niger destabilises further under sanctions hangover and climate stress, that number rises. If Mali's JNIM pushes

south, Benin and Nigeria's Kwara/Niger borders become the next spillover.

ECOWAS without the Sahel is ECOWAS without a security depth. Nigeria without ECOWAS leverage is a giant guarding its own gate with no one watching the street.

## THE ECONOMIC BLOWBACK: Trade, Power, and Migration

The Sahel exit is not just bullets. It is billions.

**TRADE:** Nigeria's formal trade with Niger was modest, but informal trade was huge — livestock, grain, fuel, and manufactured goods. Border closures in 2023–2024 killed livelihoods in border LGAs. Smuggling routes adapted, but state revenue did not. Customs lost, bandits taxed.

**POWER:** The Niger dam on the River Niger feeds into Nigeria's Kainji and Jebba hydro stations. Under ECOWAS, water sharing was governed by treaties. Under AES, it is governed by politics. If Niger decides to dam further or divert for irrigation, Nigeria's grid loses. In a country where manufacturers already pay 250/kWh on diesel, hydro volatility is a tax.

**MIGRATION:** Climate change is desertifying the Sahel faster than the Lake Chad Basin. Pastoralists move south. When movement is illegal and hostile, it becomes armed. Farmer-herder

clashes in Northcentral Nigeria are already a driver of displacement and food inflation. An AES that cannot feed its people will export its desperation. Nigeria's North will receive it.

## NIGERIA'S CHOICES: Fortress, Diplomacy, or Reform

Nigeria has three options in 2026. Only one works.

**Option 1: Fortress Nigeria.** Seal the border, build walls, deploy more troops. This is expensive, slow, and leaks. 1,608km cannot be manned. Walls redirect, they do not stop. More troops in Sokoto means fewer in the Southeast or Plateau. Fortress thinking drains the ₦68.3 trillion budget and still fails.

**Option 2: Shadow Diplomacy.** Accept that AES is here. Open back channels. Trade intelligence for trade. Offer the Niger grid connection, grain, and port access in exchange for border cooperation on banditry and terrorism. This is unpopular after 2023's intervention talk, but statesmanship is not popularity. It is outcome.

**Option 3: Fix the North.** The reason bandits and insurgents thrive is because the Nigerian state is absent. LGAs have no water, no clinics, no schools, no police. UNFPA reports 1,141 safe deliveries in the BAY states in February 2026 because 3.6 million people live without services. If Nigeria cannot govern Ehor in Uhumwode, it cannot complain that Diffa is ungoverned.

## FEATURE

# Much ado about coalition and its proponents

EGUMAMHE WILLIAMS

In recent times, the conversation around political coalitions has taken center stage in Nigeria's public discourse. While coalition-building is not new in democratic practice, the current wave of agitation raises important questions about intent, credibility, and direction. It would indeed be unfortunate if President Tinubu were to be removed—if such a scenario is even feasible given the massive support and endorsement he is getting—without a clear and credible alternative vision for the country.

There is no denying the reality Nigerians face today. The hardship is evident. Insecurity has become pervasive; citizens no longer sleep with both eyes closed. Farmers are afraid to go to their fields, and travelers embark on journeys with uncertainty about their safety. Hunger is widespread, and the cost of living has soared beyond the reach of the average Nigerian. The rising prices of petroleum products have only worsened an already fragile economic situation. These are not hidden issues—they are well-known challenges confronting the nation.

However, what remains unclear is the alternative being proposed by the opposition and the coalition advocates. It is not enough to repeatedly highlight the country's problems. Nigerians are already living through them. The real question is: what will be done differently? How will these solutions be implemented, and within



Atiku Abubakar at the conversation around political coalitions

what timeframe? Without clear answers to these questions, such political movements risk becoming exercises in rhetoric rather than vehicles for meaningful change.

In the absence of concrete proposals, some may prefer to stick with a leadership they believe is making efforts, despite the presence of systemic challenges and internal sabotage. Nigeria is a complex and diverse nation that cannot afford experimentation without direction. Leadership at this

level demands not just criticism of the present, but a well-thought-out roadmap for the future.

A closer look at some of the key figures associated with the coalition raises further concerns. Many of them have spent decades in public service, occupying various high-level positions across both military and civilian administrations. Their combined years in government run into over a century. This naturally leads to a critical question: what tangible legacies have they

left behind during their time in power?

For instance, individuals who have served as governors, ministers, legislators, and even vice president have had ample opportunity to influence governance and national development. Yet, their current criticisms of the system often lack acknowledgment of their own roles within it. If the system is deeply flawed, as they claim, to what extent were they contributors to those flaws?

Moreover, the sudden shift in po-

litical alignment by some coalition proponents raises questions about consistency and motivation. Many were once strong allies within the same system they now oppose. Their departure from previous affiliations, without clear ideological justification, creates the impression that personal ambition rather than national interest may be at play.

The issue is not whether change is necessary—change is a constant in any evolving society. The real issue is the nature and direction of that change. Nigerians deserve more than vague promises and recycled criticisms. They deserve a clear, actionable plan that addresses insecurity, economic hardship, and governance inefficiencies.

If the coalition seeks to be taken seriously, it must go beyond pointing out the obvious. It must articulate specific policies, demonstrate capacity, and provide measurable timelines for implementation. Nigerians must be convinced not just that change is needed, but that the proposed alternative is credible, practical, and sustainable.

Ultimately, the call for change must be anchored on substance, not sentiment. It is not enough to want a different government; the critical question remains—change to what? Until that question is convincingly answered, the debate around coalition politics may remain, at best, an interesting conversation and, at worst, a distraction from the urgent task of nation-building.

## Climate debt: Why the global south is done waiting for loss and damage funds

CLARETH SOLOMON

The Global South did not cause the climate crisis. It is paying for it anyway.

In 2026, Pakistan is still rebuilding from the 2022 floods that submerged a third of the country and cost \$30 billion. Malawi is burying victims of Cyclone Freddy, 18 months after it killed 1,200 people. Nigeria's Benue trough floods displaced 1.4 million in 2022, and 2024's wet season washed away farms in Jigawa and Yobe before harvest.

At COP27 in 2022, the world agreed to a "Loss and Damage Fund" — money from rich polluters to poor countries for climate disasters they didn't create. By April 2026, the fund has \$792 million pledged and \$40 million disbursed.

Pakistan's 2022 loss alone was 750 times the total disbursed. The Niger Delta has lost fishing grounds for 50 years. Lake Chad has shrunk 90% since 1963. The Global South is done waiting. In 2026, it is billing, litigating, and walking away.

Now, Behold The Math of Injustice: Who Emitted, Who Drowned?

The math is not disputed. Since 1850, the US, EU-27, and UK account for 52% of cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Add Russia, Canada, Japan, and Australia, and the Global North is responsible for 65%.

Africa accounts for 3.8%. Nigeria accounts for 0.3%. Yet Nigeria ranks 6th globally in climate vulnerability, per the 2024 Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index. The top 20 most vulnerable countries are all in the Global South. The top 20 emitters are all in the Global North, plus China.

This is not charity. It is liability. If a

factory upstream poisons your river, you sue. If a century of industrialization floods your delta, the same principle applies. The Global South is now saying so, out loud.

### THE FUND THAT WASN'T: COP TO COP, PROMISE TO PROMISE

The Loss and Damage Fund was the headline from COP27 in Egypt. By COP28 in Dubai, the structure was agreed: World Bank as interim host, pledges invited. COP29 in Baku in 2024 operationalized it. COP30 in Belém in 2025 was meant to capitalize it.

### HERE'S THE 2026 BALANCE SHEET:

Pledged: \$792 million — mostly from EU, UAE, US, and UK.

Paid: \$128 million — mostly into World Bank trust accounts.

Disbursed: \$40 million — to pilot projects in Malawi, Pakistan, and Vanuatu.

Needed: \$400 billion per year by 2030, per UN estimates.

That is a 0.01% funding rate. Nigeria's ₦68.3 trillion budget spends more on debt service in three weeks than the world has disbursed for all climate damage in three years.

The reasons are familiar. Rich countries say "fiscal constraints". They say "need to verify attribution". They say "concerned about governance". All were said about COVID vaccines. All were said about debt relief. The South hears: "We'll pay when it's convenient for us."

In 2026, convenience ended.

Nigeria's Bill: Floods, Desert, and the Niger Delta

Nigeria is a climate loss ledger.

Floods: The 2012 floods cost \$16.9 billion. The 2022 floods displaced 2.4 million and cost \$6.7 billion. NEMA's

2024 report shows 31 states affected annually. The cause is heavier rains from warmer Atlantic waters, plus Lagdo Dam releases from Cameroon, plus zero drainage in cities.

Desertification: The Sahel is moving south 600 meters per year. Eleven northern states lose farmland to dunes. Pastoralists move south. Farmer-herder conflict kills 2,000+ yearly. The 2026 budget has no line for desert reversal. The Great Green Wall is 15% complete after 15 years.

Delta Decay: Fifty years of oil spills, gas flaring, and sea-level rise have destroyed 50,000+ acres of mangroves. Fish catch is down 70% in some communities. Cancer rates in Ogoniland are 27% above national average. UNEP's 2011 cleanup estimate was \$1 billion and 30 years. In 2026, 13 years later, 11% is done.

Nigeria did not flare that gas for its own grid. It flared it for Europe's oil. Nigeria did not spill that oil for its own cars. It spilled it for global markets. The damage is local. The profit was global. The bill is unpaid.

### THE NEW TACTICS: COURTS, DEBT, AND BRICS

Since the fund is empty, the South is changing tactics.

Litigation: Vanuatu led the ICJ advisory opinion in 2024 on state responsibility for climate harm. In 2025, eight African states filed WTO disputes over EU carbon border taxes, arguing they penalize Africa for not industrializing. In 2026, Nigeria's Attorney General is preparing a class-action style suit with Pakistan and Bangladesh against 12 oil majors for "attributed loss" from 1990–2020. The legal theory is tort: your emissions, our damage.

Debt-for-Climate Swaps: Ghana,

Egypt, and Barbados have swapped portions of debt for climate adaptation commitments. The creditor cancels \$100 million if the debtor spends \$50 million on mangroves or flood walls. Nigeria is negotiating a \$2.5 billion swap with European creditors in 2026: cancel debt, fund the Niger Delta cleanup and Kano irrigation. Creditors resist because it sets a precedent. Debtors persist because they have no cash.

BRICS+ and Alternatives: Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso left ECOWAS and moved toward Russia. The broader trend is South-South finance. The BRICS New Development Bank has no loss and damage window, but it has no Western veto either. In 2025, BRICS+ announced a \$50 billion "Resilience Facility" for members. Saudi Arabia and UAE are funding it. The message: if the West won't pay, the South will pay itself and cut the West out of contracts.

### THE RISK: WHEN THE SOUTH STOPS COOPERATING

The Global North needs the South for three things: minerals, carbon sinks, and migration control.

Minerals: The energy transition runs on lithium, cobalt, copper, and nickel. 70% of cobalt is in DRC. 60% of manganese is in Gabon and South Africa. Nigeria has lithium in Nasarawa and Kogi. If the South links mineral access to climate payment, the West has a problem. Indonesia already banned nickel ore export to force battery plants onshore.

Carbon Sinks: The Congo Basin and Amazon are the world's lungs. If DRC or Brazil say "pay \$500/hectare/year or we log it," net-zero math breaks. Nigeria's forests are smaller, but its gas is not. Ending flaring costs \$2 billion. If

no one pays, flaring continues.

Migration: When floods take farms and deserts take water, people move. Europe's 2015 migration crisis was 1.3 million people. The World Bank projects 216 million internal climate migrants by 2050, most in the Global South. If loss and damage stays unfunded, the next wave hits European borders. Border walls won't hold.

The South is learning leverage. For 30 years it begged. In 2026, it bargains.

Pay the Invoice or Lose the System

The Loss and Damage Fund was meant to prove multilateralism works. In 2026, it proves the opposite. \$40 million disbursed against \$400 billion needed is not a fund. It is a photo op.

So the South is sending invoices another way. Through courts. Through debt swaps. Through BRICS. Through migration. Through mineral restrictions. The invoice will be paid. The question is whether it is paid in cash, in chaos, or in collapse.

Nigeria's choice is clear. Stop waiting for COP31. Audit climate loss since 1990 — floods, desert, Delta — and publish the number. Table it at the UN, AU, and in court. Use it to negotiate debt swaps: cancel ₦5 trillion of external debt for ₦2 trillion in verifiable Delta cleanup and northern irrigation.

Tie every new oil and mining license to loss and damage payment: 5% of revenue to a state-level fund for communities. If Shell wants OML 11, it pays Bayelsa's mangroves first.

The Global North has two options: pay for the damage its emissions caused, or pay for the instability that damage creates. The second bill is higher. It comes as refugees, as failed states, as broken supply chains, and as wars.

# Sports

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

## Korir shatters Boston Marathon course record, Lokedi repeats as champion

John Korir shattered the Boston Marathon course record on Monday, defending his title with a blistering

2:01:52 performance in conditions aided by a light tailwind.

The mark is the fifth-fastest marathon time in history and

erased the previous Boston course record by 70 seconds, as he pulled away on the Newton Hills before sealing the win on Boylston Street. Fellow Kenyan Sharon Lokedi also successfully defended her crown, winning the women's race in 2:18:51 after taking control in the Newton section and steadily extending her lead to the finish.

The elite fields delivered historic depth across both races, with multiple athletes finishing under the previous course record in the men's competition, including Alphonse Felix Simbu and Benson Kipruto. Zouhair Talbi placed fifth in 2:03:45, recording the fastest marathon time ever by an American-born competitor in the men's race, while Jess McClain also set an American

record on the women's side. Korir and Lokedi each earned \$150,000, with Korir adding a \$50,000 bonus for the course record.

The race conditions played a major role in the fast times, with clear skies and a slight tailwind offsetting cold early temperatures that started in the 30s in Hopkinton. Despite the chill at the start, conditions warmed into the mid-40s by race time, setting the stage for one of the fastest editions in the 130-year history of the event.

The wheelchair divisions also saw standout performances, including Marcel Hug's ninth men's title and Eden Rainbow-Cooper's second women's victory, as the marathon weekend delivered record-level depth across multiple categories



JOHN KORIR AND SHARON AT BOSTON MARATHON



ZADOK YOHANNA

## German giants track new sensation Zadok

At least three top German Bundesliga clubs are interested in signing AIK of Sweden youngster Zadok Yohanna.

The clubs are Borussia Dortmund, Bayer Leverkusen and RB Leipzig.

RB Leipzig, for one, would need to replace Yan Diomande, who is in hot demand and most likely to leave this summer.

Zadok, 18, has caught the imagination after a sensational start to the new season in Sweden.

The left-footed right winger is only getting started, but his Swedish club plan to cash in on his big talent with several reports now saying they would let go the exciting youngster for between 20 and 25 million euros

## NFF hosts WAFU-B workshop to drive women's football growth in West Africa

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) is set to take a decisive step toward strengthening the women's game as it hosts a three-day Women's Football Administrators Workshop in Abuja this weekend.

Organised by the West African Football Union Zone B in collaboration with the Confederation of African Football, the workshop will run from April 26 to 28 at the Exclusive Serene Hotel and Suites in Wuye.

It is expected to draw top women's football administrators from across the seven WAFU-B nations—Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger Republic, Togo and Benin Republic.

President of the NFF and WAFU-B, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, will declare the workshop open, underscoring Nigeria's growing role as a hub for football development in the region.

He will be joined by key stakeholders including WAFU-B Executive Director Philippe Tchere, CAF's Head of Women's Football Meskerem Goshime, WAFU-B Women's Football Commission President Amina Amani, and former Super Falcons goalkeeper Precious Dede, who now serves as WAFU-B Women's Football Development Manager.

Dede, alongside Meskerem and CAF instructors Jules McGeever and Thuba Sibanda, will facilitate sessions designed to equip participants with modern tools for advancing the women's game.

The workshop agenda reflects a comprehensive approach. Day One will focus on the growth and

evolution of women's football in Africa, offering a global perspective while examining regional challenges and leadership dynamics.

Day Two shifts to practical strategies, including lessons from the Ghana Football Association, and case studies of top-performing clubs such as Mamelodi Sundowns and ASEC Mimosas.

The final day will be action-driven, with participants mapping out strategic goals, defining pathways for implementation, and aligning ideas into concrete development frameworks.



NFF PRESIDENT IBRAHIM GUSAU

## Pro-wrestling Africa scribe, Olukoya urges Fed Govt to pay greater attention to wrestling development

Secretary General of Pro-Wrestling Africa, Olusesan Olukoya has called on the Federal Government to pay special attention to the development of professional wrestling in the country.

He made the appeal, following the rising profile and impressive exploits of Nigerian-born WWE stars Obafemi

and Onos.

Nigerian powerhouse Obafemi Femi delivered the biggest win of his career after defeating "The Beast" Brock Lesnar in a shocking and emphatic show-down on WWE programme.

Speaking on the fight, Olukoya noted that his exploit is an indication that Nigeria boasts of talented mats men who need

encouragement for them to dominate the game globally.

"The victory of Obafemi is an indication that the country is blessed with raw talents and we at Pro-Wrestling Africa are confident that with adequate encouragement, support and exposure, our wrestlers will make the country proud internationally.

"All we're asking for is for governments at all levels to invest in professional wrestling in order to create employments for our youths, keep them away from crime and enable them bring glory to their fatherland", he stated.

Olukoya was confident that with adequate support, Nigerian wrestlers will compete more favourably against their opponents from other parts of the world with a declaration that Nigeria have the fighters who can withstand any opposition anywhere in the world.



OLUSESAN OLUKOYA

## Schools compete for honours at Lagos volleyball championship

Lagos State will host the second edition of the National School Volleyball Championships from April 21 to April 24 at the Teslim Balogun Stadium.

President of the Nigeria School Sport Federation (NSSF), Olabisi Joseph, said in a statement on Monday that schools from across the country had converged for the four-day tournament.

She said the competition meant for secondary schools is organised by the NSSF in collaboration with the Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF), with support from the Lagos State Sports Commission (LSSC).

Joseph said the annual tournament aims to develop volleyball in the school system and identify outstanding athletes

who will represent Nigeria at the International School Sport Federation (ISF) events.

She expressed delight at the growing interest among schools nationwide and urged participants to be worthy ambassadors of their institutions.

"In Nigeria, we are blessed with an abundance of talent in the school system.

"Volleyball, being one of the popular sports in schools, has ignited healthy rivalry among students.

"Sports stimulates learning, so we are building a total child through events like this," she said.

Joseph added that standout athletes from the Lagos championship would be shortlisted to compete at the ISF World School Volleyball Championship in China.



NATIONAL SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

# 2027 AFCON: CAF delegations storm Uganda, hold crucial meeting with hosts

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

A high powered delegation from the Confederation of African Football (CAF) has arrived in Uganda for a crucial strategic engagement with the three PAMOJA host nations of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The high-level meetings, scheduled to take place in Kampala from April 22 to 23, will focus on assessing progress

and aligning on key delivery priorities ahead of the continental showpiece.

According to CAF, the two-day engagement will provide a platform for all stakeholders to review the next phase of preparations, including infrastructure development, logistics, security planning, and operational frameworks required to successfully host the tournament.

The PAMOJA bid a joint hosting arrangement between the three East African nations was awarded the rights to stage

the 2027 edition of the Africa Cup of Nations, marking a historic return of the competition to the region.

CAF officials are expected to hold separate and joint sessions with representatives of the host nations to ensure timelines are met and standards are aligned with international requirements.

The meetings are seen as a critical step in ensuring that the East African trio remains on track to deliver a successful and memorable tournament in 2027.



## Table Tennis: Akanbi, Asaju emerge champions at Alabi Memorial Table Tennis tournament in Osun

The newly built Idera Multi-Purpose Hall in Otan Ayegbaju, Osun State, played host to thrilling action as Rilwan Akanbi and Bisola Asaju emerged champions at the 6th Michael and Felicia Alabi Memorial Table Tennis Tournament.

Over five days, more than 200 players from across Nigeria competed fiercely for honours and a share of the N5 million prize pool, an increase from N3.5 million in the previous edition. Organised under the auspices of the Nigeria Table Tennis Federation and powered by the Michael and Felicia Alabi Foundation, the tournament continues to grow in stature as one of Nigeria's premier table tennis events.

Akanbi's road to the men's singles title was defined by resilience and determination. He dethroned defending champion Abdulbasit Abdulfatai in a high-intensity semifinal clash before defeating Wasiu Azeez 4-2 in the final to claim the crown.

In the women's singles, Asaju capitalised on a shifting competitive landscape to secure victory. She overcame Favour Ojo 4-2 in the final, following the early exit of reigning champion Hope Udoaka in the round of 16—a development that underscored the rising depth in the women's game.

The junior categories also delivered standout performances. Chinenye Okafor dominated the girls' U-15 final

with a 3-0 victory over debutant Deborah Festus, whose impressive run to the final drew widespread admiration. Festus was particularly praised by Adesoji Tayo for her fearless display against more experienced opponents.

In the boys' U-15 category, Umar Ayoola showcased his class with a commanding 3-0 win over Abdulateef Abdul-salam to secure the title.

At the closing ceremony, Tunde Popoola, Secretary General of the Nigeria Olympic Committee, commended Ayodeji Alabi, chairman of the Osun State Table Tennis Association, for his dedication to sustaining the tournament. He urged participants to leverage the competition as a pathway to national team selection.

The event also paid tribute to a respected figure in Nigerian table tennis, John Peters, who



RILWAN AKANBI

recently turned 80. Recognised as Nigeria's oldest international umpire, Peters continues to

officiate at major competitions, symbolising an enduring commitment to the sport

## World Cup 2026: Ghana to unveil new coach on Thursday, contractual details revealed

Ghana are set to officially unveil Carlos Queiroz as their new head coach on Thursday, marking a significant step in the Black Stars' preparations for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The vastly experienced tactician is expected to address the media during his unveiling, where he will outline his plans and vision for the national team ahead of the global showpiece.

Queiroz will not be arriving alone, as he is set to be accompanied by his long-time assistant Roger De Sa, along with three additional backroom staff members to strengthen Ghana's technical setup.

Details of his contract have also emerged, revealing a short-term arrangement that underscores the urgency of Ghana's World Cup ambitions. The agreement will initially

run for just four months.

However, it includes a high-stakes performance clause should Ghana reach the semi-finals of the tournament, Queiroz will automatically be retained as head coach on a permanent basis.

The arrangement reflects a results-driven approach by the Ghana Football Association, as the Black Stars aim to make a deep run at the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

## Lukaku returns to Napoli, leaves again to continue his recovery

In what should be a tension-leasing move for reigning Serie A champions, Napoli, their star forward, Romelu Lukaku returned to Italy today but he didn't stay long as he has already returned to Belgium to continue individual training, but this time with the club's approval and as such, he won't be facing any fine or sanction.

After more than two weeks away from the club, which was during the last international break, Lukaku returned and, according to Repubblica, met with the club's directors on this morning. He had remained in Belgium without his club's consent during the March break, receiving a fine and being frozen out of the team.

Several sources, including Sky Sport Italia and TMW, report that today's meeting did not involve Antonio Conte, but only sporting director Giovanni Manna and Lukaku's agent Federico Pastorello and Sky Sport claims that Lukaku didn't even cross paths with his teammates at the team's training

centre

Now, according to the report, the meeting between the two parties was amicable and resulted in the striker receiving the green light to return to Belgium for individual training sessions as this season was marred by a severe muscle injury suffered during the pre-season, which forced him to the sidelines before the season started.

He spent seven months on the sidelines, starting no games with the Partenopei this season and scoring just one goal and now, according to a separate report from Nicholas Schira, the idea is for him to be available for Napoli's last three games of the season.

Now, Lukaku is expected to return to Naples in two weeks and, by then the ex-Roma and Inter star hopes to be fit for the last three games of the season against Bologna, Pisa and Udinese and, naturally, the World Cup with the Belgium national team but there is no news yet on his future for the 2026-27 season



ROMELU LUKAKU



CAF DELEGATION AHEAD OF CRUCIAL AFCON 2027 PREPARATIONS

# FEATURE



## Give us this day our daily bread

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Food is no longer grown. It is fought over.

By April 2026, the FAO Food Price Index is 18% below its March 2022 peak, when Russia invaded Ukraine. Governments cite that number as proof the crisis is over.

Tell that to the 3.6 million IDPs in Nigeria's BAY states, where UNFPA delivered nutrition support to 5,155 children in February alone because wasting is rising. Tell it to the trader in Kano whose bag of maize costs 240% more than in 2020. Tell it to Egypt, which spends 12% of import bills on wheat and riots when bakeries close.

The 2022 price shock is gone. The food war is not. It has moved from missiles in the Black Sea to heat in the Sahel, to speculators in Chicago, to broken roads in Benue. Ukraine was the spark. Climate is the fuel. Dysfunctional markets are the oxygen. In 2026, hunger is not about scarcity. It is about access. And access is a weapon.

### LET' TALK ABOUT UKRAINE: THE WAR THAT REWIRED WHEAT

Before February 2022, Ukraine and Russia supplied 28% of global wheat exports, 15% of corn, and 75% of sunflower oil. The Black Sea was the world's breadbasket corridor.

The invasion closed ports. Prices exploded. Egypt, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Bangladesh — all major wheat importers — faced fiscal and social shocks. Nigeria's 2022 food inflation crossed 23% partly because flour mills couldn't source grain.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative in July 2022 eased it. When Russia exited in July 2023, Ukraine forced a new corridor with naval drones and insurance deals. By 2025, Ukraine was exporting 80% of pre-war volumes. Prices fell.

But the war did two things that did not reverse.

First, it proved food is a strategic asset. Countries banned exports to hoard. India banned wheat in May 2022. Indonesia banned palm oil. Argentina taxed grain. The WTO rulebook burned. Food nationalism is now policy.

Second, it diversified buyers. Egypt now buys more from France and Romania. Nigeria's flour millers buy from Canada and the US. Freight routes are longer, insurance is higher, and a Houthi missile in the Red Sea adds \$50 per tonne. The system is brittle. One more shock breaks it.

### AND THE CLIMATE RUMBLES: THE FARM IS MOVING

Even if peace returned to Ukraine tomorrow, climate has already redrawn the farm map.

Heat: Every 1°C rise cuts wheat yields 6%. The Sahel is 1.5°C hotter than 1950. Northern Nigeria's millet belt is becoming marginal. In 2024, heat waves in India cut wheat output 10%. In

2025, Brazil's soy lost 15% to drought.

Floods: Nigeria's 2022 floods destroyed 1.4 million hectares of farmland. Pakistan lost 4.4 million. South Sudan loses a third of harvests annually. Floods don't just kill crops. They kill roads. A Benue farmer can survive rain. He cannot survive when the Makurdi bridge is gone and traders won't come.

Unpredictability: The planting calendar is dead. Rain comes late or all at once. Farmers plant twice, harvest once. Insurance doesn't exist. Credit does. So debt grows and yields don't.

The result: staple volatility. The World Bank's 2026 outlook says 345 million people face acute food insecurity, up from 135 million in 2019. Most are in Africa and South Asia. Most did not fight a war. The climate fought them.

### SPECULATION: HUNGER AS AN ASSET CLASS

Food prices are set in Chicago, Paris, and Kansas, not Kano, Kisumu, or Karachi.

After 2022, hedge funds and pension funds poured into agri-commodities. "Softs" became an inflation hedge. The UN Special Rapporteur

called it "financialization of hunger". When prices spike, traders profit. When they crash, farmers go broke.

Example: In 2022, wheat futures hit \$12.94/bushel. Funds were 80% long. In 2023, they went short. The price swung \$6 in 90 days. The Egyptian bakery buying flour did not care about charts. It paid the price at the dock.

Index funds don't eat. But their trades decide who does. The FAO says 80% of price volatility is not supply. It is speculation, hoarding, and policy panic.

Nigeria imports \$2 billion in wheat yearly. When Chicago sneezes, Agege bread gets smaller. When CBN rations FX, millers buy less. When they buy less, bakeries close. When bakeries close, streets fill.

### NIGERIA'S FRONTLINE: WHERE THE FOOD WAR LANDS

Nigeria is the worst-case map of all three trends.

Import Dependent: We grow 60% of what we eat, but the 40% we import is the protein and calories gap. Wheat, rice, fish, milk. The naira at N1,400/\$1 means every tonne costs 3x what it did in 2015. MPR at 25%+ means millers can't borrow to stockpile. So they run lean. Any shock empties shelves.

Production Broken: We have 34 million hectares of arable land. We farm 6.5 million. Banditry closed farms in Zamfara, Katsina, and Niger. Farmer-herder clashes closed the Middle Belt. In 2024, armed groups imposed "harvest taxes" in Benue. Farmers paid or were killed. Yield per hectare for maize is 2.0MT vs 10MT in the US. No fertilizer, no extension, no power for irrigation.

Distribution Collapsed: Post-harvest loss is 40% for tomatoes, 30% for grains. Roads are unsafe. Rail is absent. Cold chain is zero. A trailer of oranges from Benue to Lagos spends 48 hours at checkpoints, paying N200,000 in "tolls". By Lagos, half is rot.

So Nigeria loses the food war three ways: we can't buy, we can't grow, and we can't move. The 2026 budget of N68.3 trillion has N1.5 trillion for agriculture — 2.2%. Debt service is 80-90% of revenue. We are funding bondholders, not farmers.

UNFPA feeding 5,155 malnourished children in one month in three states is not aid. It is a verdict.

### FIGHTING BACK: FOUR FRONTS FOR 2026

Wars are won by logistics, not slo-

gans. The food war is the same.

Front 1: Secure the Farm. You cannot grow food in a war zone. The first line of the 2026 budget should be "clear and hold" farming corridors in Benue, Niger, Zamfara, and Borno. Not air strikes. Local police, vigilantes under state command, and courts that jail bandits. If Ehor LGA can't guarantee a farmer reaches his plot, the state has failed. Publish weekly: hectares planted, hectares harvested, bandits arrested.

Front 2: Break the Import Habit. Nigeria must grow its wheat. Lake Chad basin, Borno, and Yobe can do 500,000MT with irrigation. The CBN spent \$2 billion on failed rice pyramids. Spend \$500 million on wheat irrigation and extension. Ban wheat import licenses for millers who won't sign 30% local offtake. Tie flour tariffs to local purchase. Food security is national security.

Front 3: Build the Roads, Not Just the Apps. A "digital agric platform" is useless if a trailer can't leave Gboko. Prioritize 10,000km of rural farm-to-market roads in 2026. Not highways. Laterite roads with culverts that survive rain. Use LGAs, not FERMA contractors. Pay communities to maintain them. Every N1 billion on rural roads cuts food loss 5% and bandit tolls 100%.

Front 4: De-financialize Hunger. Nigeria cannot fix Chicago. But it can fix Lagos. Re-establish commodity boards to buy grains at harvest, store in silos, and release at planting. Strip speculators of import licenses. Mandate that 60% of wheat futures positions on AFEX be held by millers, not funds. Food is not a hedge. It is a right.

### THE NEXT WAR IS HERE

The Ukraine war showed the world that food is a weapon. Climate change showed that the battlefield is everywhere. Speculation showed that the enemy can be a trading desk.

In 2026, 345 million people are one shock away from famine. Most are in the Global South. Most are young. Most are watching their governments fund debt, not dinners.

Nigeria cannot afford to be a spectator. We have the land. We have the people. We have the hunger. What we lack is the sequencing. We fund AI while farmers flee. We launch apps while roads fail. We service bonds while children waste.

The food war will not be won in Geneva or Chicago. It will be won in Ehor, in Gboko, in Gwoza, and in every LGA where a farmer decides it is safe to plant.

If we lose that war, nothing else matters. No naira stability, no smart city, no tax reform will feed a country that cannot feed itself.

The world is not waiting. The trader in Abuja is not waiting. The mother in Uhumwode is not waiting.

In 2026, we either grow food, or we grow graves. There is no neutral ground.

