

FG begins mass trial of suspected terrorists in Abuja

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday began the mass trial of suspected terrorists charged with terrorism offences.

The trial, which usually takes place at Kainji in Niger, was moved to the Federal High Court (FHC) in Abuja because the court is currently on Easter

vacation. The vacation, which commenced on Tuesday, April 7, will end on April 13, and regular court sittings will resume on April 14 across all divisions of the court.

Another 20 suspected terrorists facing trial before Jus-

tice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday

The 13 courts at the Abuja FHC are currently busy with terrorism cases.

Some of the trial judges are Justice Binta Nyako, Justice Emeka Nwite, Justice Musa

Liman and Justice Ekerete Akpan.

While Rotimi Oyedepo, SAN, the Director of Public Prosecutions of the Federation, led the team of Federal Government lawyers before Justice Nyako, Aliyu Abubakar, the Director General, Legal Aid

Council, led the team of lawyers for the 20 suspected terrorists before Nyako.

Some of the suspected terrorists in Nyako's cause list are Hamat Modu, Isah Ali, Awal Bello, Shehu Bukar, Alhaji Kulle, Mohammed Abacha Hassan, Aminami Mallum, Ta-

siu Yakubu and Abdullahi Ali. There was heavy security beef-up in and around the Abuja Federal High Court.

All roads leading to the court were blocked by armed security personnel while a police helicopter hovered around the Central Business District

The Nigerian Observer



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Defections rock Edo North as Okpebholo consolidates grip

● Pushes devt drive

RICHARD EWEKA

AUCHI (EDO STATE)

Governor Monday Okpebholo on Tuesday tightened his political hold on Edo North as he welcomed a wave of defectors into the All Progressives Congress (APC), declaring that his administration remains firmly on course to deliver sustained development and improved liv-

ing standards across the state.

Addressing a massive rally at Auchi Open Field in Etsako West Local Government Area, the governor said his government had made visible strides within a short period despite limited resources, stressing that the SHINE Agenda was already yielding measurable results across critical sectors.

He assured the new entrants of equal opportunities within

the party, maintaining that the APC remains a cohesive platform committed to transforming Edo State for the benefit of its people.

"I thank those who have joined us today. By the time our 2.5 million votes are delivered, no one will challenge it. Edo has shown that government resources can be used to develop the state for the benefit of the people," Okpebholo declared.

The Edo State APC Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe, alongside

party leaders and key stakeholders from Edo North, formally received the defectors, describing the development as a significant boost to the party's growing dominance in the region.

Tenebe also reaffirmed the endorsement of Adams Oshiomhole as the sole candidate for Edo North Senatorial District ahead of the party's forthcoming primary election, a decision ratified by members through a voice vote.

Speaking on behalf of the defectors, former Etsako East

Local Government Chairman, Hon. Benedicta Attoh, described the move as a "homecoming," explaining that many of them were original members of the APC who had merely returned to their political base.

"We are not defecting; we are returning home. Even the Bible speaks of the prodigal son who left, but later realised there was

no better place than his foundation and returned," she said.

The rally also witnessed the defection of prominent figures, including former Edo State House of Assembly member, Hon. Sylvester Eruaga, alongside hundreds of members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who described the APC as a beacon of hope for the state's future.

Edo govt urges youths to enlist as Army recruitment team visits

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has urged eligible youths across the state to take advantage of the ongoing Nigerian Army 91 Regular Recruits Intake (RRI), as part of efforts to boost participation in the exercise.

The call follows the scheduled visit of a Nigerian Army sensitisation team to the state from April 8 to April 14, 2026, to engage, guide and support prospective applicants through the recruitment process.

The government urged qualified young men and women in Edo North, Edo Central and Edo South senatorial districts to participate, describing the exercise as an opportunity for meaningful employment, national service and personal development.

Governor Monday Okpebholo appealed to youths in the state to turn out in large numbers in order to improve Edo's representation and meet its na-

tional quota in the recruitment exercise.

He noted that enlistment in the Nigerian Army offers young people the chance to build disciplined and purposeful careers.

The government also called on parents, guardians, traditional rulers, community leaders, religious institutions and youth organisations to mobilise and encourage eligible candidates within their communities to take part in the exercise.

Interested applicants were advised to visit the official Nigerian Army recruitment portal for details on eligibility, requirements and application procedures, and to ensure all necessary documents are complete before attending designated sensitisation centres.

The state government reiterated its commitment to youth empowerment and urged collective support to ensure the success of the recruitment exercise.



MEGA RALLY:

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo (with microphone), and other members of Edo State All Progressives Congress (APC) at Edo North Senatorial District Mega Rally held in Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area where a large number of members of the opposition political parties defected to APC.

NARD suspends nationwide strike as resident doctors resume today —Pg 2

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JD Vance backs Orbán's re-election bid in Budapest visit and hits out at EU —Pg 8

Egypt to host African Women's Volleyball Championships —Pg 14

NARD suspends nationwide strike as resident doctors resume today

IBADAN

Resident doctors at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, are set to resume duties at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday (today), following the suspension of the nationwide strike by the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD).

The President of the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), UCH chapter, Dr Uthman Adedeji, confirmed the de-

velopment in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday, stating that members were complying with the national directive.

NARD had earlier embarked on an indefinite strike over the Federal Government's failure to meet its demands, which include the immediate reversal of the revised Professional Allowance, payment of outstanding promotion and salary arrears, and prompt disbursement of the 2026 Medical Residency Training Fund (MRTF),

among others.

Adedeji said the strike was suspended after an Extraordinary National Executive Council meeting, during which members nationwide were directed to return to work.

He explained that the decision followed the Federal Government's reversal of its posi-

tion on the revised professional allowance and its commitment to address other outstanding issues.

According to him, no new patients would be admitted at UCH until Wednesday (today) morning, as doctors would use the intervening period to properly hand over patients

currently on admission to consultants.

He added that stable patients would be discharged, while no new cases, including emergencies, would be accepted until full services resume.

Adedeji noted that some doctors might be granted additional time to manage critically

ill patients beyond the hand-over period, subject to approval by the association's leadership.

He reaffirmed the doctors' commitment to patient care and urged the Federal Government to urgently address the outstanding demands to prevent further disruptions in the health sector.

PTDF moves to curb foreign scholarship costs with new Petroleum College

BAUCHI

The Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) has said the establishment of the College of Petroleum and Energy Studies, Kaduna (CPESK), will significantly reduce the cost of its overseas scholarship programme.

The Deputy Manager (Services) at CPESK, Mr Sirajo Abdullahi-Fari, disclosed this on Tuesday in Bauchi during the inauguration of the 2026/2027 Overseas Scholarship Scheme screening and selection exercise.

He explained that the college would offer postgraduate programmes in Sciences, Petroleum Technology/Law, and Management, aimed at strengthening local expertise and reducing reliance on foreign training through strategic transnational partnerships.

Abdullahi-Fari added that students would benefit from local academic mentorship alongside exposure to institutions in the United Kingdom, including

the University of Strathclyde, Robert Gordon University, and the University of Portsmouth.

He noted that PTDF currently trains scholars in universities across the United Kingdom, France, China, Malaysia, and Germany to build human and institutional capacity, as well as managerial skills for Nigeria's oil, gas and energy sector.

"The training is designed to assess candidates' capacity to meet national needs in the oil and gas sector, including leadership qualities, communication skills, clarity of purpose, and suitability for overseas academic programmes," he said.

On the selection process, Abdullahi-Fari revealed that 424 candidates, comprising MSc and PhD applicants were being screened at the Bauchi centre in the North-East by 21 assessors.

He added that the exercise was being conducted simultaneously across centres in the six geopolitical zones, with final selections reflecting the federal character principle to ensure equitable state representation.

Lagos police detain officers over alleged misconduct, probe viral video

LAGOS

The Police Command in Lagos State has detained officers allegedly involved in a case of misconduct, following the emergence of a viral video showing operatives harassing youths in the Ojuelegba area of the state.

The command's spokesperson, SP Abimbola Adebisi, disclosed this in a post shared on her X handle @Abimbola-Shotayo on Tuesday.

Adebisi noted that the officers had been identified and brought before the Commissioner of Police for questioning.

She said that the statements of the officers had been obtained, while the Commissioner of Police, Mr Fatai Tijani, had ordered their detention pending the outcome of further investigation into the matter.

According to her, the command has also contacted the complainant, who is expect-

ed to report to the police on Wednesday (today) to provide a formal statement and assist with the ongoing investigation.

The image maker assured that the command was committed to a thorough and transparent process, stressing that the outcome of the investigation would be made public in due course.

The spokesperson reiterated the command's zero-tolerance stance on misconduct, emphasising that any officer found culpable would be dealt with in accordance with the law.

The development follows a video shared on X (formerly Twitter) by a user identified as Ejikeme (@ejkmykell1), which allegedly shows officers of the Anti-Cultism Squad harassing youths and confiscating their mobile phones at the Ojuelegba Under Bridge.

The video was captioned, "Police impunity is back on full display."



A MEETING:

Nigeria Interior Minister, Olunmi Tunji-Ojo (right) and the Saudi Ambassador Yousef bin Mohammed Al Barnawi at a meeting in Abuja where both countries held talks on advanced border technology, migration control and modern emergency response systems.

Displaced Ogoni communities raise alarm over renewed land grabbing

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

PORT HARCOURT

Indigenes of 14 Ogoni communities in Rivers State, displaced during the 1994 military regime of the late General Sani Abacha, have raised the alarm over renewed attempts to seize and sell their ancestral lands.

Speaking during a gathering to mark the 32nd anniversary of the sacking of the Lekuma-Ogoni communities, residents alleged that outsiders, in collusion with neighbouring communities, were unlawfully

invading their lands, with some portions reportedly being sold at giveaway prices.

A woman leader from Lekuma community in Tai Local Government Area, Esther Gboro, said the assailants frequently invade the ancestral lands without consulting the natives.

"They sell two plots of land for N300,000 and give one free. They don't care about the real owners who live there. They just come and buy the land," she said.

Gboro recounted a recent attempt to mark large portions of land for sale, which residents resisted.

"Just three days ago we saw them in the bush again. I gathered all the women to follow and know what they were doing. Even if they want to kill us like in 1994, we are ready to die protecting what is rightfully ours," she said.

Prince Barifodum, leader of the Lekuma community, described the 1994 invasion as a dark chapter in Ogoniland history, noting that over 2,000 lives were lost and homes, farms, churches, schools, and livelihoods destroyed within 48 hours.

He blamed the Nigerian government for the military-led destruction and called for justice.

He issued a stern warning to

estate agents and prospective buyers: "No land is available for sale in Lekuma communities. Our land is filled with blood, and we don't have any land for sale. We call on the Rivers State government to intervene."

Prince Barifodum also highlighted that the Lekuma Ogoni land spans three local government areas — Tai, Eleme, and Oyiabo and stressed that the federal government still owes the displaced communities reparations for the 1994 devastation.

The communities' plea underscores longstanding tensions over land rights and the urgent need for government intervention to protect the ancestral lands of Ogoni people.

Fubara reaffirms commitment to quality healthcare in Rivers

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

PORT HARCOURT

Governor Siminalayi Fubara has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to improving healthcare delivery in Rivers State, pledging sustained investment in policies and programmes that guarantee access to quality and affordable services for residents.

In a goodwill message to commemorate World Health Day on Tuesday, the governor said his government would continue to prioritise initiatives aimed at strengthening the health sector and enhancing the well-being of citizens.

Fubara urged residents to take responsibility for their health by adopting healthy lifestyles, maintaining proper hygiene, and guarding against preventable diseases.

He also stressed the importance of community participation in promoting health awareness and supporting grassroots health interventions.

"On this World Health Day, I extend warm greetings to all Rivers people. Our administration remains committed to improving healthcare in the state by prioritising initiatives that promote quality healthcare for all," he said.

The governor highlighted achievements recorded since

he assumed office, including the recruitment of over 2,000 health workers, the rehabilitation of several health facilities, and the establishment of a state health insurance scheme.

He added that his administration is working towards positioning Rivers State as a medical tourism hub with accessible and affordable healthcare services.

World Health Day, observed annually on April 7, draws global attention to critical health issues.

The 2026 theme, "Together for Health: Stand with Science," underscores the role of scientific research, collaboration, and evidence-based solutions in addressing health challeng-

es, while promoting the interconnected "One Health" approach linking human, animal, and environmental well-being.

The administration has also revived and expanded previously neglected health infrastructure, including zonal hospitals in Bori, Omoku, Ahoada, and Degema, while remodeling 153 Primary Healthcare Centres across the state to improve service delivery.

In addition, the government approved the promotion of over 400 staff of the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital and recruited 500 more personnel to strengthen manpower and efficiency in the health system.

COAS boosts troop morale with easter luncheon in Edo

BENIN CITY

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, has reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's commitment to troop welfare and operational effectiveness, hosting an Easter luncheon for soldiers of

the Forward Operation Base (FOB) Udomi in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

The event, held on Saturday, April 4, 2026, brought together troops of 4 Brigade under the 2 Division Nigerian Army in a morale-boosting gathering to mark the Easter season.

In his goodwill message, the COAS noted that the Easter celebration, coming shortly after Eid-el-Fitr, underscores Nigeria's unity and shared strength despite religious differences.

He commended officers and soldiers for their professionalism, resilience and dedication in safeguarding the nation.

Represented by the Commandant, Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport, Major General Adebayo Adegbite, the COAS acknowledged that many troops observe festive periods away from their families, yet remain steadfast in the discharge of their duties.

He described their sacrific-

es as the backbone of national security and assured personnel of continued efforts to improve their living conditions, enhance career development opportunities and strengthen support systems for their families, while promoting fairness and dignity across the service.

Earlier, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 2 Division, Major General Chinedu Nnebeife, lauded the COAS for identifying with troops in the field, describing the gesture as a demonstration of genuine commitment to their welfare regardless of deployment location.

He said the luncheon reflects the COAS' command philosophy of building a professional, adaptable and combat-ready force capable of effectively carrying out its constitutional responsibilities in a joint operational environment.

Nnebeife commended troops of 4 Brigade and 2 Division for their courage and operational successes, noting that their efforts have helped curb banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and other criminal activities in their area of responsibility, thereby boosting public confidence in the military.

In his vote of thanks, the Commander, 4 Brigade, Brigadier General Ahmed Balogun, expressed appreciation to the COAS for celebrating with the troops, describing the visit as a clear indication that their sacrifices are recognised at the highest level.

He said the presence of the COAS at the frontline had strengthened the bond between headquarters and field formations, while also acknowledging the leadership of the GOC in balancing operational demands with troop welfare.



RIMSON DELEGATION'S VISIT:

Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali Muhammad Ali (M); President of Risk Management Society of Nigeria (RIMSON), Dr Abbas Idris (5th L); Chairman Abuja Chapter of RIMSON, Mr Emmanuel Amedu (5th R); Secretary of the Society's Abuja Chapter, Hajia Mutiat Yusuf (4th R); Organising Secretary, Mr Abu Sani (4th L); NAN Head of Multimedia, Mr Ismail Adulazeez (L) and other members of NAN management, during the RIMSON delegation's visit to the Agency's headquarters in Abuja recently.

Foundation targets teacher burnout, links stress control to better learning outcomes

JUDE EHEVBA

EKPOMA

The Josemaria Escriva Foundation (JOSEF) has identified effective stress management as critical to improving teachers' performance and enhancing learning outcomes in Nigeria's primary education sector.

Chief Responsibility Officer of the foundation, Dr Jude Obasanmi, stated this during a training session under the Teachers' Skills Enhancement Project (TSEP) for selected public primary school teachers in Esan Central and Esan West Local Government Areas of Edo State.

He described teaching as one of the most stressful profes-

sions globally, noting that while stress is unavoidable, adopting healthy coping mechanisms is essential for sustaining a productive and fulfilling career.

Obasanmi listed common signs of stress among teachers to include irritability, mood swings, poor concentration, chronic fatigue, insomnia and physical symptoms such as frequent illness, palpitations, headaches and dizziness.

According to him, how teachers respond to stress determines whether they enjoy long, rewarding careers or face early burnout.

He explained that the Teachers' Skills Enhancement Project, launched in 2023 and scheduled to run until 2027, targets the training of 300

teachers and 10 Learning and Development Officers/Master Trainers.

The programme, he said, was initiated in partnership with the TY Danjuma Foundation to strengthen subject knowledge and improve curriculum delivery in primary schools.

Obasanmi added that the initiative shifted focus from infrastructure development to capacity building after identifying teacher competence as a major challenge in the education sector.

He disclosed that 60 teachers and 10 master trainers drawn from 20 public primary schools are trained annually, with the programme focusing on classroom effectiveness, stress and time management,

and mental health promotion.

He further revealed that as of 2025, about 180 teachers had already benefited from the training.

In her remarks, Edo Programme Assistant of the TY Danjuma Foundation, Mrs Emmanuel Elaigwu, said the organisation remains committed to improving the quality of life of Nigerians through interventions in education, healthcare and economic empowerment.

She emphasised that strengthening teachers is fundamental to building a resilient education system, noting that the training programme offers participants an opportunity to enhance, both their professional competence and overall wellbeing.

Okorodudu empowers 100 people with N10m in Delta

JUDE EHEVBA

OTU-JEREMI (DELTA)

The Executive Director, Projects, Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (DESO-PADEC), Olorogun Ebenezer Okorodudu, has empowered 100 people in Ughelli South Local Government Area with a total sum of N10 million.

The initiative was unveiled during a town hall meeting at the Ughelli South Local Government Secretariat in Otu-Jeremi, bringing together community leaders, stakeholders, residents and beneficiaries.

Okorodudu said the engagement was designed to update residents on the commission's activities while providing a platform for feedback and inclusive participation in governance.

He stressed that sustainable development can only be achieved when communities actively participate in identifying their needs and shaping solutions.

According to him, DESO-PADEC remains committed to addressing the concerns and pri-

orities of oil-producing communities, adding that the empowerment programme complements infrastructure development by strengthening human capacity and livelihoods.

He said the initiative aligns with Governor Sheriff Oborewori's M.O.R.E Agenda, aimed at improving the quality of life of Deltans.

Highlighting projects in the area, Okorodudu listed the renovation of a three-classroom block at Ovwodokpokpo Primary School in Olomu, rehabilitation of solar streetlights in Okpare, Ovwor and Oviru Olomu, and construction of a health centre.

Other projects include a triple-cell box culvert along the Akperhe-Agbazo Olomu Road, installation of four electricity transformers, and provision of solar-powered water schemes in Otor-Ewu, Okpare Olomu and Okwagbe communities.

He urged residents to take ownership of public projects and promote peace, unity and cooperation to sustain development efforts.

Delta govt evacuates 34 students from UNIJOS crisis

JUDE EHEVBA

ASABA

The Delta State Government has evacuated no fewer than 34 students of the University of Jos following the recent security crisis in Plateau State.

Receiving the students, the State Director of Protocol, Chief Sunday Onoriode, commended the swift intervention approved by Governor Sheriff Oborewori and coordinated by the Executive Assistant on Students Affairs, Comrade Ezekiel Okoh.

He said the evacuation became necessary following the closure of the university by its

authorities.

Onoriode expressed relief that the students returned safely, describing the effort as a reflection of proactive governance and effective coordination.

"It is an unusual time for Nigeria, especially in that part of the country, but we believe that peace will be restored. When it is time to return, you will complete your studies successfully," he said.

Earlier, Okoh explained that the evacuation followed a directive prompted by the temporary shutdown of academic activities, adding that logistics were mobilised in collaboration with stakeholders and transport operators.

Navy urges sacrifice, community support in Niger Delta operations

WARRI

The Commander of Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Delta, Commodore Shehu Tasiu, has urged naval personnel in the Niger Delta to sustain their commitment to national service and deepen engagement with host communities.

Tasiu gave the charge on Sunday while hosting officers, ratings and media executives as part of activities marking the Easter celebration.

He described Easter as a sea-

son symbolising sacrifice, love and forgiveness, values he said are central to military service.

"In the spirit of Easter, which is about sacrifice, love and forgiveness, my message to officers, ratings and civilian staff of NNS Delta is that we should continue to sacrifice for our dear nation, for the Nigerian Navy and for one another," he said.

He noted that naval personnel play a vital role in safeguarding economic activities in the region, stressing that the profession demands dedication and selflessness.

"Our personnel work tirelessly to ensure that businesses and commercial activities operate smoothly. This profession demands a high level of sacrifice, and we must continue to give our best for the country," he added.

Tasiu commended host communities for their cooperation in tackling insecurity and curbing infrastructural vandalism, urging them to sustain the support.

He emphasised the need to intensify ongoing operations against crude oil theft and

other maritime crimes, while reaffirming the Navy's commitment to collaboration with private security outfits.

He also called on residents to provide timely and credible information to aid efforts in protecting critical national assets.

"We appreciate the continuous support of our host communities, as it has made our job easier. We hope they will sustain this cooperation while we remain committed to improving safety and wellbeing in the Niger Delta and beyond," he said

NEWS

NSC signs 2026 performance bond, highlights 2025 gains

LAGOS

The Nigerian Shippers' Council (NSC) has signed its 2026 Sectoral Performance Bond, reaffirming its commitment to accountability, transparency and improved service delivery in the maritime sector.

The Executive Secretary of the NSC, Dr Akutah Pius, disclosed this in a statement issued by the Head of the council's Public Relations Unit, Mrs Rebecca Adamu, on Tuesday in Lagos.

Akutah said the perfor-

mance bond was signed during a stakeholders' engagement conducted by the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboyega Oyetola, who emphasised the need for a result-oriented approach across ministries, departments and agencies.

He noted that the performance bonds were binding commitments that would be closely monitored.

The NSC boss said the council's management had reinforced its commitment to improved performance in line with national development pri-

orities.

Highlighting achievements in 2025, Akutah said the council recorded significant progress in the development of Inland Dry Ports (IDPs) across designated locations nationwide as part of efforts to strengthen transport and logis-

tics infrastructure.

He added that the council continued to facilitate the establishment of IDPs with the support of the supervising ministry.

Akutah further stated that the council's intervention in resolving disputes between

port service providers and users saved Nigerians significant costs while improving efficiency in the maritime sector.

He also highlighted the implementation of the Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS), noting that documentation processes had been

fully digitised, thereby streamlining operations, reducing delays and enhancing service delivery.

He reiterated the council's commitment to driving reforms and improving service standards in the port and logistics sector.

Diaspora group urges FG to defend democracy

ABUJA

Nigerians in Diaspora for Good Governance Organisation has called on the Federal Government to protect the country's democracy from individuals and groups seeking to undermine it.

The group's President, Raymond Edoh, made the call on Tuesday during a news conference in Abuja.

Edoh said attempts to intimidate political parties or institutions, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), amount to a direct threat to democracy.

"We urge President Bola Tinubu to demonstrate leadership by protecting democratic

principles and ensuring fairness," he said.

He also appealed to the international community, including the United States Department of State and the United Nations, to support Nigeria in safeguarding its democratic values.

Edoh stressed the need to preserve the independence of the legislature and judiciary, noting that the survival of democracy depends on their autonomy.

He urged Nigerian youths to remain united in defending the nation's unity and democratic system.

According to him, their courage inspires hope and reinforces the resolve that democracy must endure.

Ex S'East governors back Tinubu for 2nd term

ENUGU

Former governors from the South-East have endorsed President Bola Tinubu for re-election ahead of the next general election cycle.

The endorsement followed a meeting held on Tuesday in Enugu, according to a communiqué issued at the end of deliberations by the newly formed South-East Forum of Former Governors.

Those present at the meeting included Sullivan Chime, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, Chris Ngige, Okezie Ikpeazu and Martin Elechi.

Reading the communiqué, the Minister of Works and former Ebonyi State governor, Dave Umahi, said the forum was formally established on April 7, 2026, to support serving South-East governors and provide advisory input on regional and national issues.

Umahi said some former governors, including Ikedi Ohakim, Orji Uzor Kalu, Chimaroke Nnamani, Theodore Orji and Virginia Etiaba, were absent due to prior engagements such as medical trips and other commitments.

He, however, expressed op-

timism that over 90 per cent of former governors from the region would attend subsequent meetings.

The communiqué stated that the forum is open to all former South-East governors, irrespective of political affiliation, with the aim of fostering unity and strengthening support for incumbent governors.

"We commend Mr President for key appointments to sons and daughters of the South-East, as well as the infrastructure revolution ongoing in the region and across the country," Umahi said.

The forum declared support for Tinubu's re-election, noting that serving governors in the region were aligned with the position.

"We boldly say that all the governors of the South-East are supporting Mr President's re-election, and we will continue to give them our full support," he added.

The group also commended current governors for efforts in infrastructure, security and empowerment, while praising the Federal Government for inclusive appointments and ongoing projects.



VISIT TO JOS:

President Bola Tinubu (left) addressing a cross section of Plateau residents during his visit to Jos over the Palm Sunday attack in Jos North recently.

Kogi revitalises 150 PHCs as state marks World Health Day

LOKOJA

The Kogi State Government has said that it is revitalising over 150 primary healthcare centres (PHCs) across the 21 local government areas as part of efforts to strengthen healthcare delivery.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr Adeiza Abdulazeez, disclosed this at a news conference marking the 2026 World Health Day on Tuesday in Lokoja.

The event, themed: "Together for Health, Stand with Science," focused on the importance of collective action in improving public health outcomes.

Abdulazeez said the theme underscored the core of public health and the shared responsibility to enhance citizens' well-being.

He highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen the health system through evidence-based policies, improved data management and strategic partnerships.

The commissioner reiterated the government's commitment to primary healthcare revitalisation, expansion of health insurance and investment in healthcare infrastructure.

"We will continue to prioritise primary healthcare, equip our facilities and empower our workforce to deliver quality services across the 21 LGAs.

"In line with this, over 150 PHCs are being revitalised, with some completed and others at various stages of completion," he said.

He added that many residents were being enrolled in health insurance schemes to ensure universal access to care.

Abdulazeez stressed the need for unity in science-driven healthcare, from disease prevention and control to improved diagnostics and treatment.

"Science remains the foundation of progress in health," he said, noting that collaboration across sectors, disciplines and communities was critical.

He, however, acknowledged challenges such as limited access to quality healthcare in rural areas, human resource gaps and disease burdens.

The commissioner called for stronger partnerships among government, academia and communities, as well as efforts to promote trust in science and counter misinformation.

He also emphasised the need to support local research and innovation to ensure that scientific advancements benefit citizens.

Abdulazeez reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to

building a resilient, inclusive and responsive health system.

Also speaking, the State Epidemiologist, Dr Austin Ojotule, said the event aimed to raise awareness about health needs and promote healthy living.

"We need collaboration to ensure science works for healthy living," he said.

Mr Hamza Aliyu, Chairperson of KONGONET, said the programme helped raise awareness on public health issues and encouraged science-based planning.

"We must move away from unverified local methods and recognise that health is driven by science," he said, citing misconceptions around immunisation and COVID-19.

Activities marking the day included awareness campaigns, a health walk and screenings for blood sugar, hypertension, eye health and tuberculosis.

Police nab 18yr-old in N20m ransom sting in Lagos

LAGOS

The Lagos State Police Command has arrested an 18-year-old suspect over a N20 million threat-to-life and ransom demand case.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Fatai Tijani, disclosed this on Tuesday at the command headquarters in Ikeja.

He said the arrest followed a carefully executed decoy

operation after the command received a complaint from the Ojokoro Local Council Development Area.

According to him, operatives were immediately deployed to track and apprehend the suspect.

"The suspect was arrested on March 27 while attempting to collect the ransom during a sting operation.

"Items recovered from him include an HP laptop and a

flash drive, which are currently being examined as part of ongoing investigations," he said.

Tijani said the suspect confessed to the crime and also admitted involvement in a previous attempted burglary at a commercial bank.

He added that the arrest was part of intensified efforts by the command to combat kidnapping, extortion and related crimes.

The commissioner assured

that investigations were ongoing to identify possible accomplices and determine the full extent of the suspect's activities.

He said the suspect would be prosecuted upon conclusion of investigations.

Tijani reiterated the command's commitment to maintaining law and order, warning criminal elements to desist from acts capable of threatening public safety.

PTDF screens 5,885 candidates for overseas scholarships

ABUJA

The Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) has commenced the screening of 5,885 shortlisted candidates nationwide for its 2026/2027 Overseas Scholarship Scheme (OSS) covering MSc and Ph.D programmes.

Dr Bello Mustapha, Deputy General Manager, Education and Training at PTDF, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja at the start of the interview process.

He revealed that the Fund received over 38,000 applications, from which 5,885 candidates were shortlisted through what he described as a trans-

parent process.

According to him, the screening exercise is being conducted simultaneously across the six geo-political zones: North-Central (Abuja), North-East (Bauchi), North-West (Kaduna), South-South (Rivers), South-East (Enugu) and South-West (Oyo).

"The shortlisted candidates

are drawn from over 38,000 applicants who indicated interest in the scholarship programme. Selection is based on strict criteria, including academic performance, relevant work experience and overall qualifications.

"Candidates must possess at least a second class upper degree, alongside other re-

quirements. Secondary school results are also assessed, with grades contributing to the overall evaluation," Mustapha said.

He added that candidates were allowed to attend interviews at any centre of their choice, irrespective of their state of origin.

Mustapha noted that the final selection would reflect the Federal Character principle to ensure equitable representation across states, while the number of successful candidates would depend on available budgetary provisions and management approval.

He explained that the scheme focuses on petrole-

um-related courses, with supporting programmes such as management and petroleum law also included.

Some candidates expressed appreciation to the Federal Government for the opportunity.

Miss Maria Ochanya, a Biochemistry graduate, said the scheme would enable her pursue an MSc in Industrial Biotechnology and contribute meaningfully to society.

Similarly, Mr Alhaji Ikoh, who applied for an MSc in Environmental Science with a background in Architecture, described the process as professional and expressed optimism about being selected.



RIPPED OFF ROOF:

Rubbles of the ripped off roof of the newly completed Kubo Bus Terminal by heavy storm, during a downpour, along Abuja-Keffi Road on Tuesday.

Foundation urges support for creative industry, green spaces

ABUJA

The Pink Fleur Foundation has called on governments at all levels to prioritise support for Nigeria's creative industry and the preservation of green spaces.

Founder of the organisation, Zainab Salihijo, made the appeal on Tuesday in Abuja during the foundation's art and photography exhibition themed "Change Your Story."

Salihijo described the creative sector and green spaces as critical to innovation, mental wellbe-

ing and sustainable livelihoods.

She urged policymakers to broaden their understanding of employment and economic growth by recognising creative work as a viable career path, noting that more Nigerians could unlock their potential if supported to pursue non-traditional professions.

Drawing from her personal journey, she explained that her transition from biotechnology and public health into art reflects the opportunities within the creative space.

She also raised concern over

the gradual disappearance of green areas in the Federal Capital Territory, citing Jabi Lake Park as an example of once vibrant environments now under threat.

According to her, such spaces are essential for creative expression and mental health, as many individuals rely on nature for inspiration and emotional balance.

Speaking on the exhibition, Salihijo said the works were inspired by her daily walks throughout 2025, which she described as transformative.

She added that the exhibition features photographic pieces captured in various lo-

cations, including Nigeria and Saudi Arabia.

"Change Your Story is designed to encourage individuals to embrace personal growth and pursue their aspirations without fear of societal judgment," she said.

Also speaking, Raisa Dukas of the United States Embassy in Abuja commended the exhibition's depth and visual storytelling, noting that the artworks highlight human connection and introspection.

She emphasised that storytelling remains a powerful tool for building relationships and fostering collaboration.

Banks, telecoms, consumer goods stocks to drive Q2 market growth

ABUJA

Investors have expressed optimism that banking, telecommunications, oil and gas, industrial and consumer goods stocks will drive market performance in the second quarter (Q2) of 2026.

The investors spoke in separate interviews with newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja, projecting sustained, though more selective, growth in the equities market.

Mr Moses Igrude, National Coordinator of the Independent Shareholders Association of Nigeria, identified companies such

as Seplat, Aradel, MTN, NAHCO and major banks as key drivers of market activity.

He said these firms have demonstrated strong fundamentals and would remain attractive to investors.

Igrude added that the insurance sector would witness increased activity due to ongoing recapitalisation, while corporate financial results expected in Q2 would significantly influence market direction.

"The growth experienced in the first quarter is a result of economic stability, availability of forex and other indicators

that enable proper planning and execution," he said.

Mrs Bisi Bakare, National Coordinator of the Pragmatic Shareholders' Association, attributed the strong Q1 rally to carryover momentum from 2025, when the market recorded over 50 per cent returns, boosting investor confidence.

She noted that Q2 may shift from a broad rally to stock-specific performance, with growth likely to continue at a slower pace as much optimism has already been priced in.

Bakare added that ongoing bank recapitalisation, Q1

earnings results and sustained domestic institutional support would help maintain market momentum.

Also, the Secretary-General of the Liberated Shareholders' Association, Prince Ridhwan Hamza, said the Nigerian Exchange Ltd. (NGX) is well-positioned for continued growth.

He attributed this to increased investment education, wider market awareness and the listing of promising companies such as NAHCO, Zenith Bank, Eterna, APR, Airtel, Chams, UCAP, Fidson, Jaiz, CWG, Aradel and Japaul.

Army dismisses ex-soldier's claims, reaffirms troops' welfare

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army has dismissed as false and misleading allegations made by a dismissed soldier, Lance Corporal Rotimi Olamilekan, describing them as a deliberate attempt to misinform the public and undermine troop morale.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Acting Director of Army Public Relations, Col. Appolonia Anele, said Olamilekan, popularly known as "Soja Boi" was dismissed for "persistent and grave acts of indiscipline," including violations of the Armed Forces Social Media Policy.

She clarified that his dismissal was not related to the expression of personal opinions but followed due process in line with the Armed Forces Act and established military regulations.

Anele refuted claims that soldiers are poorly remunerated, stating that the Army operates a structured and transparent salary system guided by the Manual

of Financial Administration for the Armed Forces of Nigeria (MAFA), with entitlements tied to rank and years of service.

She noted that personnel receive monthly salaries along with allowances such as uniform, ration cash and operational allowances, especially for those deployed in theatres like Operation HADIN KAI in the North-East.

The Army spokesperson also dismissed assertions that troops purchase their own uniforms and protective gear.

According to her, provision of kits, including bulletproof vests and helmets, is an institutional responsibility handled through established logistics systems.

"While some personnel may choose to supplement issued kits for personal comfort, this is entirely voluntary and does not indicate any systemic failure," she said.

Anele described claims that soldiers are deployed without protective equipment as "reckless and unfounded," warning that such narratives could erode public confidence and affect troop morale.

Gov Idris mourns Kebbi Assembly Speaker Usman-Zuru

BIRNIN KEBBI

Governor Nasir Idris of Kebbi State has expressed deep sorrow over the death of the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Alhaji Muhammad Usman-Zuru.

The governor's condolence message was conveyed in a statement issued on Tuesday by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Alhaji Yahaya Sarki.

Usman-Zuru died on Monday in a hospital in Cairo, Egypt, where he had been receiving treatment for a prolonged illness.

His death was confirmed by the Clerk of the House, Alhaji Suleiman Shamaki.

Idris described the loss as tragic and monumental, noting that the late Speaker was a trusted ally, committed lawmaker and outstanding leader.

"He was a pillar of legislative stability and democratic governance, as well as a dependable partner in our collective efforts to advance the development of Kebbi State," the governor said.

He added that the Speaker's death had created a significant vacuum in the state's leadership, noting that his calm disposition, maturity and commitment to unity would be sorely missed.

"Usman-Zuru was a man of honour, integrity and loyalty who served the state with distinction and left behind a legacy of selfless service.

"Kebbi has lost one of its finest sons at a time when his experience and counsel were most needed. The loss is not only personal to the government and people of Kebbi, but also a painful blow to the House of Assembly, the political class and all who knew him," he said.

Hamza added that the anticipated listing of the Dangote Refinery in Q2 could further boost the market.

The NGX recorded strong growth in Q1 2026, with market capitalisation rising by N29.83

NEWS

Alleged fake cancer claims: Society seeks probe, warns against exploitation

ABUJA

The Nigerian Cancer Society (NCS) has called for a thorough investigation into alleged false cancer claims used to solicit public donations, warning that such actions could erode trust in genuine cases.

The society's National Director of Publicity, Mr Bashir Mohammed, made the call in

a statement issued on Tuesday in Abuja.

Mohammed said the organisation's attention was drawn to reports involving a social media personality, Blessing Okoro, popularly known as Blessing CEO, over alleged misrepresentation of a cancer diagnosis to attract financial support.

He noted that Okoro reportedly appealed to the public for

assistance based on claims of a serious health condition, attracting significant donations from well-meaning Nigerians.

However, he said subsequent developments had raised concerns about the authenticity of the claims, with allegations suggesting possible misinformation and deception.

"The development has generated widespread reactions, including calls for accountability, refund of donations and a

thorough investigation, given the sensitive nature of cancer," he said.

Mohammed described the alleged act as unethical, unfortunate and detrimental to ongoing efforts to combat cancer in Nigeria.

He stressed that cancer is a delicate condition requiring sincerity, compassion and responsible handling, warning that exploiting such illnesses for personal gain could undermine support systems for genuine patients.

"Any attempt to mislead the public using cancer narratives

will not only damage credibility, but also discourage support for those truly in need," he said.

He disclosed that the society would engage relevant security agencies to investigate the matter and ensure accountability where necessary.

Mohammed advised cancer patients and their families to seek guidance and verification from the NCS, especially regarding public fundraising and access to care.

He added that the society has a dedicated committee responsible for patient support, intervention and coordination

of assistance to ensure transparency and professionalism.

He urged donors and the general public to remain vigilant and support only verified channels, stressing that trust, accountability and integrity are critical in sustaining the fight against cancer.

Concerns over fraudulent medical fundraising have grown in recent years amid increasing reliance on social media appeals, with stakeholders warning that unchecked incidents could weaken public confidence and reduce support for legitimate cases.

World Health Day: Expert warns against harmful myths, advocates science-based care

IBADAN

A public health physician, Dr Omolade Falade, has cautioned Nigerians against harmful health myths and urged the adoption of science-based healthcare practices.

Falade, of Bethel Specialist Hospital, Ibadan, gave the advice on Tuesday in an interview with newsmen as Nigeria joined the global community to mark World Health Day (WHD) 2026, themed "Together for Health, Stand with Science."

She debunked the misconception that eliminating carbohydrates is key to weight loss, explaining that carbohydrates are essential sources of energy and fibre.

According to her, healthier options include, unrefined or minimally processed carbohydrates, such as oats, fruits, Ofada or Abakaliki rice, millet, guinea corn, yam, sweet potatoes, cassava and wheat, which should be consumed in moderation.

She advised limiting refined carbohydrates found in white

flour products, sugary drinks and soft drinks.

Falade also warned against skipping meals as a weight-loss strategy, noting that it often leads to increased hunger, slower metabolism and eventual weight gain.

She clarified that not all fats are harmful, highlighting the benefits of fats from fish such as mackerel, nuts and olive oil for brain function and hormone production, while advising reduced intake of unhealthy fats like refined vegetable oils, butter, margarine, full cream milk and palm oil.

The physician cautioned against indiscriminate use of supplements and herbal products, stressing that they should only be taken on professional advice, as not all "natural" products are safe.

She also dismissed the notion that thinness equates to good health, urging routine medical checks, including body mass index measurement, blood pressure monitoring and laboratory tests.



COMMITTEE INAUGURATION:

L-R: Chairman, Olubadan Economic and Investment Development Committee, Chief Onikepo Akande; Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Rashidi Ladoja, and former Head of Service of the Federation, and Co-chair of the Committee, Prof. Oladapo Afolabi, during the inauguration of the Committee by Oba Ladoja in Ibadan on Tuesday.

Abia Disability Commission donates 100 white canes to school for the blind

UMUAHIA

The Abia State Disability Commission on Tuesday donated 100 white canes to the School for the Blind in Umuahia to enhance mobility for visually impaired students and staff.

Chairman of the commission, Mr David Anyaele, said

the gesture was in fulfilment of Governor Alex Otti's campaign promise to support persons living with disabilities.

"Every resource required to operationalise that mandate is being provided to ensure that no Abia resident is left behind because of disability," he said.

Anyaele, who shared his personal experience of losing

his hands in a rebel attack in Sierra Leone, encouraged the students to remain resilient, stressing that disability does not limit potential.

"Let not your heart be troubled. The future is bright," he said, citing the example of the President of the Nigerian Association of the Blind, Mr Stanley Onyebuchi, who hails from the state and has excelled despite visual impairment.

The school's Principal, Mrs

Ngozi Emelike, commended the commission for the prompt intervention, describing it as a reassurance of government support.

"Mobility stick is very important to the visually impaired. I requested it, and they responded without delay," she said.

The event featured the distribution of mobility canes to students and visually impaired staff.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public his hereby notified that, I, ANTHONIA ITOHAN ADERINSOLA AKINPELU, is the wife and Next-of- Kin of Late ADEWALE AKINPELU, who died intestate on April 4th, 2018 in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. He has since been buried.

The general public and concerned authorities should please take note.

Signed:

ANTHONIA ITOHAN ADERINSOLA AKINPELU

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as ONWUDEGU GILBERT, now wish to be known and called ONWUDEGU GILBERT IYAMAH. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as ONWUDEGU ELIZABETH, now wish to be known and addressed as ONWUDEGU ELIZABETH MOGARAH. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as MISS IKILE CHINYERE, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. OKODUWA CHINYERE MARTHA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as IFUNANYA VIVIAN AGUDOSI, now wish to be known and addressed as IFUNANYA VIVIAN EZEALLA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

Nasarawa varsity provides free healthcare to 200 Keffi residents

KEFFI (NASARAWA)

The Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK), has provided free medical services to 200 residents of Keffi as part of activities marking its silver jubilee anniversary.

Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. Sa'adatu Liman, declared the outreach open on Tuesday. She was represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Prof. Halima Kutigi.

Liman said the outreach also formed part of activities lined

up for the institution's 8th combined convocation ceremony scheduled for April 11.

"Today also marks World Health Day, and we all know that health is wealth. We cannot celebrate our anniversary without celebrating the community that has hosted us for so long," she said.

She explained that the outreach was part of the university's Corporate Social Responsibility and a way of appreciating its host community while commemorating its 25th anniversary and World Health Day.

The outreach included ba-

sic medical tests, provision of over-the-counter drugs and referrals for complicated cases.

Dr Umar Suleiman, Acting Director of the Directorate of Health Services, said the programme catered for 200 residents and expressed hope that future editions would be expanded.

"The services include malaria testing, random blood sugar checks, typhoid screening, blood pressure measurement and weight checks.

"We are also providing deworming drugs, sanitary pads, oral hygiene education and

health talks on nutrition, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation," he said.

He commended the university management for approving the initiative and urged residents to take advantage of it.

One of the beneficiaries, Miss Patience Guana, praised the university, describing the outreach as timely support for residents who struggle to afford healthcare services.

"We are surprised and grateful. This will go a long way in helping people like us who find it difficult to pay for medical services," she said.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Cash swap: Court jails man 10yrs for aiding Boko Haram with N750,000

ABUJA

A Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday sentenced Awal Bello to 10 years' imprisonment for facilitating the exchange of N750,000 to Boko Haram during the 2023 currency swap.

Trial judge, Justice Binta Nyako, also convicted Bello for paying a N20,000 levy to the terrorist group, contrary to Section 21 of the Terrorism Prevention Act, 2013.

The court held that the sentences would run concurrently. Bello, who pleaded guilty

to the two-count charge filed by the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), appealed for leniency before sentencing.

In the charge marked FHC/KNJ/CR/563/2026, the Federal Government accused Bello, a resident of Mantari Village in Bama Local Government Area of Borno State, of providing material support to Boko Haram by facilitating the transfer of N750,000, an offence punishable under Section 13 of the Act.

He was also found guilty of paying N20,000 to the group

as tax.

Justice Nyako ordered that Bello undergo rehabilitation and deradicalisation.

In a related case, the court sentenced Hamat Modu to 10 years' imprisonment on each of four terrorism-related counts after he pleaded guilty.

The sentences are to run concurrently, with an order for rehabilitation and deradicalisation.

Similarly, Isah Ali, who was 18 at the time of his arrest, was convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to one of the two counts against him.

The court struck out the first count on the prosecution's application.

Ali, who had spent three years in detention, pleaded for mercy, saying he was young when he was recruited into the terrorist group.

His counsel, Director-General of the Legal Aid Council, Aliyu Abubakar, urged the court to consider the circumstances of his involvement.

Justice Nyako ordered his rehabilitation alongside the prison term.

In another judgment, Shehu Bukar was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment after pleading guilty to one of five counts, which involved supplying livestock to Boko Haram. He, however, denied other allegations, including participation in a deadly attack in Kon-

duga, Borno State.

Also, the court sentenced 43-year-old Alhaji Kulle to five years' imprisonment on two counts, to run concurrently, for making weekly payments of N6,000 to Boko Haram.

Justice Nyako further sentenced Tasiu Yakubu to seven years' imprisonment on a one-count charge.

The court held that the sentence would take effect from the date of his arrest and ordered his rehabilitation.

The AGF and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), had urged the court to impose a stiffer penalty in line with the law, but the court exercised discretion in sentencing.

In another case, Abdullahi Ali was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for providing logistical support, including fuel, to the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

The sentence takes effect from November 20, 2023, the date of his arrest.

Ex-convict gets 3yrs for drug possession in Kaduna

KADUNA

A Federal High Court in Kaduna has sentenced a 26-year-old ex-convict, Abel Godwin, to three years' imprisonment for unlawful possession of hard drugs.

The NDLEA prosecutor, T.J. Atserhegh, told the court that Godwin was arrested on April 4 with 3kg of cannabis, 5kg of tramadol and 8g of Exol-5, a substance similar to cocaine.

Godwin pleaded guilty and asked for leniency, but the prosecution informed the court that he was a repeat offender, having been jailed in February 2025.

Justice Mohammed Garba sentenced him to one year on each of the three counts, to run consecutively without the option of a fine.

The judge ordered that the seized drugs be destroyed after 30 days.

Court arraigns surety for alleged obstruction of justice

IBADAN

A 36-year-old man, Bright Mohammed, has been arraigned before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly obstructing justice by failing to produce a defendant for whom he stood surety.

Mohammed pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Prosecutor Insp. Adeshina Folaranmi told the court that the defendant failed to present

one Ayotunde Fanimo, who is standing trial for fraud and theft, thereby attempting to pervert the course of justice.

The offence allegedly occurred on April 2 at the police monitoring unit in Eleyele, Ibadan, and contravenes Section 126 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State.

Magistrate Oluwabusayo Osho granted bail in the sum of N5 million with two sureties in like sum and adjourned the case until July 6 for hearing.



INAUGURATION OF CBMWW WARD:

L-R: Enugu East Senatorial Zonal Women Leader, City Boy Movement, Women Wing (CBMWW), Ms Nneka-May Ike; representative of Head of Yoruba Community in Enugu, Chief Joshua Ayanfemi; Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, CBMWW, Mrs Ezeaku Uche-Udo; Women Leader, Enugu State CBMWW, Mrs Amaka Nweke; Senior Special Advisers to Enugu State Governor on Sustainable Development Goals, Ms Onyinye Akubilo-Okpalanma and Secretary CBMWW, Ms Chinyere Ojobo, during the inauguration of CBMWW Ward, Local Government Area and State Officials in Enugu on Tuesday.

Court jails 55-yr-old for one month for damaging Mosque property

IBADAN

A Mapo Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan has sentenced a 55-year-old man, Kazeem Salako, to one month in prison for maliciously damaging padlocks belonging to a mosque.

Chief Magistrate O.O. Latunji delivered the judgment after nearly two years of trial, convicting Salako on the charge of malicious damage while acquitting him of conspiracy.

The court also discharged the second defendant, Yusuf

Abubakar, for lack of evidence.

Salako was given an option of a N10,000 fine and ordered to pay an additional N10,000 as compensation for the damaged padlocks.

Earlier, the prosecutor, Insp. Oluseye Akinola, told the court that the offence was committed on September 16, 2024, at Oni-Gari Street, Ayegun area of Ibadan.

He said evidence showed that the defendants had disagreements with other members of the mosque over doctrinal practices, including wearing footwear into the mosque, which contravenes Islamic norms.

Akinola added that despite an agreement to keep the mosque locked when not in use, Salako broke the padlocks and damaged a window to gain access.

Travel agent arraigned over alleged N8.5m Qatar visa scam

IBADAN

Police on Tuesday arraigned a 53-year-old travel agent, Femi Oyeleye, before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly defrauding an

intending emigrant of N8.5 million under the pretence of procuring a Qatar visa.

Oyeleye, whose address was not disclosed, is facing a two-count charge of fraud and stealing but pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutor Insp. Femi Olu-

wadare told the court that the defendant collected the money from one Taiwo Anjorin in June 2025 at Ring Road, Ibadan, but failed to deliver the promised visa.

The offences, he said, contravene Sections 383, 390(9),

and 419 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Chief Magistrate T.G. Daodu granted the defendant bail in the sum of N5 million with two sureties in like sum, one of whom must be his sibling. The case was adjourned until May 13 for hearing

Court remands man over alleged possession of 15.6kg cannabis

KADUNA

A Federal High Court in Kaduna has ordered the remand of a 35-year-old man, Mohammed Sani, over alleged possession

of 15.6 kilograms of cannabis sativa.

The defendant, arraigned by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), pleaded not guilty to the one-count charge.

Justice Amina Shuaibu ordered his remand in a correctional facility and adjourned the case until April 30 for trial.

Prosecutor Ocholi David told the court that the defendant was arrested on April 5 in

the Abakwa area of Kaduna following intelligence reports that he was dealing in illicit drugs.

He said the offence violates Section 11(b) of the NDLEA Act.

COAS pushes inter-agency synergy to improve troops' healthcare

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt-Gen. Wai-di Shaibu, has called for stronger inter-agency collaboration and integrated administrative protocols to enhance medical services and welfare for Nigerian Army personnel.

Shaibu made the call on Tuesday in Abuja while receiving the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Defence Health Maintenance Limited (DHML), retired Rear Adm. Azeze Afolayan, during a courtesy visit to Army Headquarters.

In a statement by the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Col. Appolonia Anele, the COAS stressed that the growing complexity of military operations across the country demands a responsive and modern healthcare system capable of sustaining both the physical and mental readiness of troops.

He emphasised that personnel welfare must extend beyond ac-

tive service, noting that the Nigerian Army remained committed to the well-being of its veterans.

"Retirement often comes with socio-economic challenges. The man must survive after years of dedicated service. Our responsibility to personnel does not end when they leave the colours," he said.

Shaibu also underscored the importance of institutional memory, describing Afolayan as an insider whose continued contributions after retirement highlight the value of experience in strengthening military systems.

Earlier, Afolayan advocated the institutionalisation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in human resources and administrative units within military medical services.

He stressed that standardised processes and proper documentation were essential for efficient healthcare delivery, urging a shift from ad-hoc practices to structured, policy-driven systems.

NEWS

Foreign

WHO suspends Gaza medical evacuations after contractor killed by Israeli troops

The World Health Organization has suspended medical evacuations from Gaza to Egypt via the Rafah crossing after a contractor was killed by Israeli troops on Monday.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the contractor – named locally as Majdi Aslan, 54 – was killed in a "security incident" and that two staff were present but not injured. He gave no further details.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said the contractor was driving a WHO-rented vehicle in southern Gaza when it was targeted by Israeli forces.

Israel's military said its troops "identified an unmarked vehicle approaching them and the Yellow Line, posing an im-

mediate threat", referring to the line marking Israeli-held territory.

"In response, the troops fired warning shots. The vehicle continued to accelerate toward the troops, who then responded with additional fire that hit the vehicle," it added.

"The incident is under review."

Tedros said the WHO had suspended medical evacuations of sick and wounded Palestinians from Gaza via Rafah to Egypt until further notice.

"We call for the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers," he added.

Hanan Balkhy, the WHO's regional director, described the killing of the contractor as "a devastating loss" and warned that the suspension of medical evacuations was "cutting off a

critical pathway to care for patients".

At al-Aqsa hospital in central Gaza, a colleague of Majdi Aslan told reporters the vehicle he was driving was clearly marked with the WHO's logo on all sides, and that it had been at the front of a co-ordinated convoy transporting patients to the Rafah crossing when it came under fire from an Israeli tank.

"The tank came out directly and targeted the driver so that he would stop. There were three people in the vehicle; the driver is the one who paid the price for the situation we are living in," Raed Aslan said. "What ceasefire is this? Every day we have someone killed."

A medic at the hospital, Dr Fathi al-Lulu, said Majdi Aslan

had been targeted while "co-ordinating the transfer of patients from the Gaza Strip to the Egyptian side".

The Rafah crossing was reopened for the limited movement of people in both directions in early February as part of October's ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, having been largely closed since the Gazan side was captured by Israeli forces in May 2024.

Israeli authorities shut the crossing on 28 February following the start of the US-Israeli war with Iran, but it reopened again after 20 days.

Israeli military body Cogat says approximately 1,150 people have left Gaza via the crossing over the past two months and that the same number have entered Gaza.

One gunman killed and two injured in shooting at Israeli consulate in Istanbul

A gunman was killed and two were injured in a shootout near the Israeli consulate in Istanbul, which Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called a "heinous act of terror".

Two policemen were "slightly injured" in the gun fight, Turkish Interior Minister Mustafa Ciftci said.

Ciftci said the attackers had come to Istanbul from the city of Izmit by rental car and that two of them were brothers.

In a statement on X, the interior ministry named the gunman killed as Yunus E.S., who it said was "connected to the terrorist organisation that exploits religion".

That is understood to be a reference to the Islamic State group, though no group has said it was behind the attack.

"We will not allow the climate of trust in Turkey to be damaged by such vile and timed provocations as today's," Erdogan said.

Police were initially quoted as saying two attackers had died, but local governor Davut Gul later clarified that only one had been killed.

The two injured attackers were named as Onur Ç and Enes Ç, who the interior ministry said were brothers.

The two police officers injured in the shooting were not in life-threatening condition,

the ministry's statement added, with one shot in the leg and the other in the ear.

"Intensive digital communication has been detected among the three neutralised terrorists, and the interrogation of the injured terrorists continues," it said.

Governor Gul told reporters that the attackers had used rifles and pistols in the assault.

He also said that no Israeli diplomatic personnel were in the consulate, which is located in Istanbul's main business district in the Besiktas area.

The gunfight happened in broad daylight. Video on social media appears to capture the moment when one armed attacker was shot by police and fell to the ground.

Reuters news agency quoted a witness at the scene as saying that gunfire sounds had been "loud" and continued to increase "for 15-20 minutes".

Unverified videos circulating online showed several police vans and a heavy police presence around the building, which was cordoned off for several hours after the attempted attack.

There are no Israeli diplomats stationed in Turkey at the moment and the consulate has been empty for the past two-and-a-half years, amid deteriorating relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv over the war in Gaza.



E-ELECTION BID VISIT:

Viktor Orbán and JD Vance at the re-election bid in Budapest visit.

JD Vance backs Orbán's re-election bid in Budapest visit and hits out at EU

Five days before Hungarians vote in elections that could bring down Viktor Orbán after 16 years in office, US Vice-President JD Vance has intervened in the campaign to give the Hungarian prime minister a ringing endorsement, while delivering another blistering attack on the EU.

Standing beside Orbán, Vance said he was in Budapest "to help him in this campaign cycle" although he conceded the US would "work with whoever wins this election".

Orbán's main rival Péter Magyar is well ahead in most opinion polls.

The veteran prime minister is a key European ally of the Trump administration, as well as being Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest partner in the EU.

After winning four elections in a row since 2010, Orbán faces the toughest challenge in a

political career going back almost 40 years.

In a last-ditch bid to boost the prime minister before the 12 April vote, Vance and his wife Usha arrived in Budapest for the first top-level US visit to Hungary for 20 years. They were welcomed by Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, who said Orbán's friendship with President Donald Trump had created a "new golden age" in relations.

Péter Magyar responded to the visit by saying his Tisza party welcomed Vance to Budapest, and that when his party came to office it would consider the US as a prominent partner, both as a Nato ally and as an economic partner.

Following talks with Orbán, Vance launched a bitter attack on the European Union and Ukraine.

He accused the EU of "one of the worst examples of foreign election interference that I have ever

seen or ever even read about... because they hate this guy".

Vance added that "part of the reason" for his visit was because "interference that's come from the bureaucracy in Brussels has been truly disgraceful".

EU leaders have been frustrated for weeks that Orbán has slapped a veto on billions of euros of essential funding for Ukraine, even though he agreed to it last December. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz spoke of "a gross act of disloyalty".

However, they have carefully avoided getting caught up in the Hungarian election campaign.

Vance's remarks were reminiscent of a speech he gave in Munich in February 2025, when he accused European leaders of placing restrictions on freedom of speech.

He also repeated unsubstantiated claims that Kyiv had be-

come involved in the election campaign, without giving details, alleging "elements within the Ukrainian intelligence services [had] tried to put their thumb on the scale of American elections, on Hungarian elections. This is just what they do".

Orbán has made hostility to Ukraine and its president, Volodymyr Zelensky, a cornerstone of his campaign.

When the government of Serbia – Hungary's neighbour to the south – announced that explosives had been found and neutralised near the Turk-Stream gas pipeline, close to the border with Hungary, Orbán and pro-government media labelled the incident a terror attack on Hungary's energy supply. Ukraine swiftly declared it had nothing to do with the incident, suggesting it was a "Russian false-flag operation".

One dead as train travelling 99mph collides with lorry in France

A train driver has died after his high-speed passenger train collided with a lorry at a level crossing in France while travelling at an estimated 160km/h (99mph).

The incident took place shortly before 07:00 (05:00 GMT) on Tuesday morning between Béthune and Lens in the northern Pas-de-Calais region.

Two people initially deemed to have sustained critical injuries following the crash were "doing well", while 13 others sustained minor injuries, local authorities said.

The driver of the lorry, which was carrying military equipment at the time, is in police custody, but officials said it was too early to determine the cause. An investigation into potential aggravated manslaughter is under way.

The vehicle belonged to a commercial haulier and the driver was not a member of the military, officials said.

The train had been travelling from Dunkirk to Paris when the collision occurred. After hitting the lorry, it continued moving for several hundred metres before coming to a stop.

One person staying nearby told regional newspaper La Voix du Nord that they heard the train's horn blaring for around eight to 10 seconds be-

fore the crash occurred. Max, who is staying around 500m from the collision site, said the windows of the house rattled from the impact.

CEO of France's state-owned rail operator, Jean Castex, confirmed the train driver had been a 56-year-old long-term employee of the company at a news conference on Tuesday.

"My first thoughts go to his family, his loved ones and colleagues," he said.

"I also want to pay tribute to the two train staff members who were on board and who calmly stepped in and helped the passengers."

Castex, also a former French prime minister, said there had not been any indication of any problem with the barriers at the level crossing, adding that a lower-speed train had passed through minutes earlier.

The region's President Xavier Bertrand described the incident as a "terrible tragedy".

A passenger on the train told La Voix du Nord that some people had broken their noses due to the impact.

Eliot, who had been commuting to Paris for work, described seeing windows breaking and passengers hitting their heads, adding that he was "lucky" in comparison.

Foreign**NEWS****Bahamas police search for US woman who reportedly fell off boat**

Police in the Bahamas are searching for an American woman who disappeared after reportedly falling overboard from a small boat while vacationing with her husband.

Her husband told authorities that she went missing on Saturday at about 19:30 local time (00:30 BST) after falling out of an 8ft (2.4m) hard-bottom dinghy and being swept out to sea by strong currents.

The woman's husband told police that he and his wife left Hope Town for Elbow Cay on the Bahamian island of Abaco on Saturday evening when she fell overboard, taking the boat's keys with her.

In a statement on social media, Royal Bahamas Police Force said it is investigating and multiple agencies are searching for the woman.

"She apparently bounced out of the boat," Hope Town Volunteer Fire and Rescue chief Troy Pritchard told CBS News, the BBC's US news partner.

"Strong currents subse-

quently carried her away, and he lost sight of her," the Royal Bahamas Police Force said.

The husband, also a US national, paddled the vessel to shore and made it to the Marsh Harbour Boat Yard at about 04:00 local time (09:00 BST) on Sunday.

The husband told a person in the boat yard that his wife was missing, and that person then informed the authorities.

"U.S. counterparts, volunteers, the Royal Bahamas Police Force and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force are assisting with this," the Royal Bahamas Police Force told CBS News in a statement.

The missing woman was named by local authorities as Lynette Hooker from Michigan, according to CBS News.

In a March 2025 travel advisory, the US State Department warned of potentially deadly boating issues in the Bahamas.

The advisory said "boating is not well regulated" on the islands, and "injuries and deaths have occurred".

Slow moving traffic convoys protest against fuel prices in Ireland

Drivers are being warned to give themselves extra time for their journeys as protests are held on roads in the Republic of Ireland against the cost of fuel.

Gardaí (Irish police) said there were slow-moving convoys at various locations on main roads leading to Dublin and near other large urban areas.

Dublin Airport also advised passengers to be prepared for disruption while travelling to the airport.

A Translink spokesperson said the protests were causing some disruption to their coach services to Dublin and Dublin Airport from Northern Ireland.

Gardaí are helping to manage traffic on the M1, N2, N3,

N4, N7 and N11.

Vehicles taking part in the protest are also parked or moving slowly on O'Connell Street in Dublin.

The conflict in the Middle East has caused rapid price rises for both petrol and diesel.

Some 20% of the world's oil trade, the raw ingredient for producing both petrol and diesel, has been halted by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Prices in the Republic of Ireland have surged to about €2.14 (£1.86) a litre for diesel and roughly €1.91 (£1.66) a litre for petrol, with higher prices in some places.

Tánaiste (Irish Deputy Prime Minister) Simon Harris is planning to hold a meeting on Wednesday dedicated to the issue of energy.

War in Ukraine: Cameroon confirms death of 16 nationals enlisted in Russian army

Cameroon confirmed on Monday the death of 16 of its citizens involved alongside the Russian military in Ukraine.

The Cameroonian ministry of external relations published a list of 16 names it had obtained through a verbal note from the Russian embassy in Yaoundé on March 5, 2026.

The document said the death of these Cameroonian nationals occurred in the zone of the so-called "special military operation," a term used by Russia to describe its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, launched in February 2022.

The names of the 16 citizens were read on national radio on Monday. Authorities called on the families of the deceased to reach out to the government.

This is the first time that

Yaoundé confirms the death of Cameroonian fighters involved with the Russian military in Ukraine.

In February, an investigation from the collective All Eyes on Wagner found that hundreds of African combatants enlisted in the Russian military between 2023 and mid-2025 had died.

With 94 deaths out of 335 fighters, Cameroon recorded the highest death toll among African contingents.

In November 2025, Kyiv said Moscow had recruited over 1,400 African nationals to fight in its war against Ukraine. Over the past months, several African countries including Kenya and South Africa have had to address cases of citizens allegedly tricked into joining Russian armed forces.

**FLOODED STREET IN ANGOLA:**

A tricycle wades through flooded streets in the Angola capital.

Dozens killed as Angola flood death toll rises

Dozens of people have died from floods following heavy rains in recent days in the Angolan capital, Luanda, and other areas across the country.

Emergency services have reported at least 29 deaths in Luanda and the central city of Benguela, with more than 34,000 people affected.

The flooding also damaged thousands of homes and public infrastructure, with damaged roads and bridges, fallen trees and electric poles. The collapse

of a bridge pillar on Hâlo River disrupted traffic between Benguela and Huambo provinces.

President João Lourenço mourned the deaths, saying the country was in a "race against the clock" to find, rescue and offer medical care to those affected.

Of the deaths, most have been reported in Benguela, with 23 deaths and Luanda with six. At least 17 people were injured, according to a statement by the Civil Protection and Fire Service (SPCB)

on Monday.

Local broadcaster Radio Solidária reported four more deaths in Cuanza-Sul province, putting the total death toll at 33.

Earlier on Sunday, the SCPB reported that 15 had died and said thousands had been forced to leave their homes.

In a statement from the presidency, Lourenço noted that numerous houses had flooded or collapsed, roads cut off and key utilities including water systems damaged.

He said the government would provide help to the victims through the different state agencies that have been mobilised to deal with the crisis.

Heavy rains are not unusual in southern Africa during the rainy season, and neighbouring Namibia and Zambia have suffered deadly floods in recent years.

In 2023, 30 people died and more than 116,000 people were affected across Angola following severe flooding that affected 15 out of 18 provinces.

Vietnam's leader To Lam strengthens power in unanimous assembly vote

Vietnam's communist-dominated general assembly has elected To Lam, the party leader, to be the country's president and head of state, an unusual concentration of power in one person.

He was elected unanimously by the 500 seat assembly which started sitting on Monday, following the Communist Party Congress in January, which makes all the big decisions about the country's future direction.

This makes To Lam the most powerful leader in Vietnam in recent decades.

To Lam rose over the last decade by serving as the powerful Minister for Public Security, enforcing a nationwide

anti-corruption drive which saw many of his potential rivals disgraced and purged.

In 2024, he took over the jobs of both general secretary of the communist party and president temporarily, after the resignation of then-president Vo Van Thuong and the death of party boss Nguyen Phu Trong.

There is reported to be opposition, especially within the military, to To Lam keeping these two top jobs after the party congress.

The Communist Party of Vietnam has always preferred collective leadership shared among the four most senior national positions, now expanded to five, known as the "five pillars".

However, To Lam has now secured enough backing to take the two top jobs for the next five years, inviting comparisons with China, where President Xi Jinping has also concentrated power in his hands.

Xi congratulated To Lam in January, when he successfully retained his job as secretary general of Vietnam's communist party.

Xi said at the time that he would work with To Lam to "carry forward the traditional friendship" between the two socialist neighbours.

There is historical anti-Chinese sentiment expressed by the Vietnamese population, but relations between the two communist parties are close.

Compared to China, however, the communist party's central committee plays a stronger role in checking the power of its secretary general, Carl Thayer, Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales, told the BBC.

"To Lam is the first among equals, but he's also answerable to the Politburo," he said, pointing to other senior figures in the 19-member committee.

"There's still a balance. But To Lam has shown that he can work collectively and build coalitions," he added.

The real test of To Lam's leadership, though, will be whether he can meet the breathtakingly ambitious growth targets he has set his government, at a time when the global economic outlook is so unsettled.

To Lam has already announced a programme of sweeping reforms to help Vietnam reach the goal of being an upper income country within the next two decades.

He has set a target of keeping annual economic growth at more than 10%, and containing corruption, building on the "blazing furnace" campaign started by his predecessor that has disciplined and dismissed tens of thousands of officials.

**VIETNAM LEADER TO LAM**

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10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
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10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
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FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770
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EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

FEATURES

Task before inec in 2027 election in Nigeria: What is the projection for a free, fair and credible contest?

ANSARI UMAR

The projection for a free and fair contest in Nigeria's 2027 election is uncertain, with several challenges ahead. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has expressed commitment to delivering a credible election, but concerns about its independence and capacity to conduct a fair poll persist.

KEY CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

Electoral reforms: There has been a call for constitutional amendments to strip the president of power to control the judiciary and INEC, ensuring their independence.

- Voter registration and technology: Concerns about voter registration, electronic transmission of results, and potential BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) failures remain.

- Security and violence: The risk of election-related violence, vote-buying, and intimidation is a significant concern.
- Judicial integrity: The judiciary's role in resolving electoral disputes is crucial, but concerns about its independence and effectiveness persist.

Experts emphasize the need for comprehensive reforms, transparency, and accountability to ensure a credible election.

Some potential indicators of a free and fair contest include:

- Transparent and inclusive electoral processes
- Improved voter education and participation
- Effective mechanisms for addressing electoral disputes
- Independent and impartial electoral institutions

For a more accurate assessment, it's essential to monitor developments and statements from INEC, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders.

The electorate would like to know more about the electoral reforms being proposed or the role of technology in Nigeria's 2027 election but truth remains that the projection is uncertain.

Key challenges include electoral reforms, voter registration and technology, security and violence, and judicial integrity.

The EU has urged Nigeria to accelerate electoral reforms, warning that delays could undermine democratic progress.

INEC has proposed a N873.78 billion budget for the 2027 elections, prioritizing technology and early planning. The commission has also unveiled revised guidelines for political parties, aiming to improve internal democracy and electoral credibility.

Some potential indicators of a free and fair contest include transparent electoral processes, improved voter education, and effective mechanisms for addressing disputes.

ELECTORAL REFORMS BEING PROPOSED IN NIGERIA INCLUDE:

- Transparency in INEC appointments: Ensuring the appointment process is transparent and free from political interference.

- Legal protection for technological tools: Protecting BVAS and IReV to ensure credible elections.

- Early accreditation of party agents: Ensuring party agents are ac-



INEC CHAIRMAN, JOASH AMUPITAN

credited on time.

- Inclusion of women and PWDs: Increasing participation of women and persons with disabilities in candidate selection.

- Electoral Offences Commission: Establishing a commission to address electoral malpractices.

INEC IS ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT ITS INDEPENDENCE BY:

- Strengthening leadership capacity: Improving operational systems and institutional coherence.

- Engaging stakeholders: Collaborating with civil society, security agencies, and international observers.

MEASURES TO ENSURE SECURITY OF VOTERS AND ELECTORAL OFFICIALS INCLUDE:

- Inter-agency collaboration: INEC working with security agencies to prevent violence and voter suppression.

- Voter education: Educating voters on electoral processes and security measures

- Deployment of security personnel: Coordinating with the Office of National Security Adviser for security deployment.

ELECTORAL OFFENCES COMMISSION IMPLICATIONS

The proposed Electoral Offences Commission aims to address electoral malpractices, such as vote-buying and intimidation, by investigating and prosecuting offenders. This could help reduce electoral violence and promote transparency. However, its effectiveness depends on its independence, funding, and enforcement powers.

INEC TRANSPARENCY IN APPOINTMENTS TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY, INEC SHOULD:

- Advertise positions publicly

- Conduct open and participatory confirmation hearings
- Disclose selection criteria and timelines
- Involve civil society and stakeholders in the process

MEASURES TO ADDRESS VOTER APATHY TO TACKLE VOTER APATHY, INEC PLANS:

- Enhanced voter education and awareness
- Electronic transmission of results
- Stricter campaign finance regulations
- Improved security measures
- Inclusive electoral processes

These measures aim to increase trust and participation in the electoral process.

ELECTORAL OFFENCES COMMISSION POWERS AND STRUCTURE

The proposed Electoral Offences Commission aims to address electoral malpractices, such as vote-buying and intimidation, by investigating and prosecuting offenders. Its specific powers and structure are still being discussed, but it's expected to have the authority to investigate and prosecute electoral crimes, and possibly impose

penalties.

INEC's Electronic Voting System Security Measures

INEC plans to ensure the security of electronic voting systems through:

- Rigorous testing of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) before elections

- Training of ad-hoc staff to prevent replacement with untrained personnel
- Electronic transmission of results to enhance transparency
- Collaboration with security agencies to prevent electoral violence and protect voters.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Civil society organizations will play a crucial role in promoting electoral transparency by:

- Monitoring the electoral process and reporting irregularities
- Advocating for electoral reforms and good governance
- Educating voters on their rights and responsibilities
- Pushing for the establishment of an independent Electoral Offences Commission.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED ELECTORAL OFFENCES COMMISSION

The specific timelines for implementing the proposed Electoral Offences Commission are not clearly stated, but it's expected to be established before the 2027 elections to address electoral malpractices.

Security of Electronic Voting Systems

INEC PLANS TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS THROUGH:

- Rigorous testing of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) before elections
- Training of ad-hoc staff to prevent

replacement with untrained personnel

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Civil Society Organizations' Measures

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WILL PROMOTE ELECTORAL TRANSPARENCY BY:

- Monitoring the electoral process and reporting irregularities
- Advocating for electoral reforms and good governance
- Educating voters on their rights and responsibilities
- Pushing for the establishment of an independent Electoral Offences Commission

The proposed Electoral Offences Commission is expected to address electoral malpractices, such as vote-buying and intimidation, by investigating and prosecuting offenders. Its specific powers and structure are still being discussed, but it's likely to have authority to investigate and prosecute electoral crimes, and possibly impose penalties.

The commission's structure and powers will likely be defined by the National Assembly, and it's expected to be established before the 2027 elections. INEC has emphasized the need for such a commission to strengthen electoral integrity and address recurring problems, including opaque party primaries and internal membership disputes.

To ensure its independence and effectiveness, the proposed Electoral Offences Commission should have a robust structure that guarantees autonomy from political interference. Here are some measures that can help:

- Independent Appointment Process*: The commission's leadership should be appointed through a transparent and inclusive process, involving multiple stakeholders, to minimize political influence

- Financial Autonomy: The commission should have a separate budget allocation, ensuring it can operate without relying on government funding.

- Security of Tenure: Commission members should have fixed terms, with removal only possible through impeachment or other stringent processes.

- Investigative Powers: The commission should have authority to investigate electoral malpractices, seize evidence, and prosecute offenders.

- Collaboration with INEC: The commission should work closely with INEC to share information and coordinate efforts to prevent electoral malpractices.

TO FURTHER ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS, THE COMMISSION SHOULD:

- Engage Stakeholders: Collaborate with civil society organizations, community leaders, and international observers to promote transparency and accountability⁷.

- Build Capacity: Train staff and officials to handle investigations, prosecutions, and other tasks effectively.

- Public Awareness: Educate citizens about electoral laws, regulations, and the commission's role in addressing malpractices.

Key challenges include electoral reforms, voter registration and technology, security and violence, and judicial integrity

What is the Projection for a Free, Fair and Credible Contest?

Offences Commission can implement these measures:

- Clear Guidelines: Establish transparent guidelines for investigations, prosecutions, and penalties to prevent arbitrary decisions.
- Independent Oversight: Create an oversight body or mechanism to review the commission's decisions and actions.
- Judicial Review: Allow for judicial review of the commission's decisions to ensure they are lawful and reasonable.
- Protection for Whistleblowers: Safeguard those reporting electoral malpractices from retaliation or harassment.
- Transparency in Operations: Make the commission's processes, decisions, and actions publicly accessible to promote accountability.
- Checks and Balances: Ensure the commission's powers are balanced by other institutions, such as the judiciary and legislature.

Guidelines for Investigations and Prosecutions

The proposed Electoral Offences Commission aims to establish clear guidelines for investigations and prosecutions, including:

- Investigating electoral offences, such as vote-buying, bribery, and undue influence
- Prosecuting offenders, with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment
- Seizing assets used in electoral offences

The commission will have an Investigations, Legal and Prosecutions Unit, responsible for conducting investigations and prosecutions



THE PROTESTERS

Oversight Body Structure and Empowerment

The oversight body, likely the Electoral Offences Commission, will comprise:

- A Chairman
- A Secretary
- Representatives from government ministries and agencies
- Six Nigerians representing each geo-political zone, with at least two women.

The commission will have the power to:

- Investigate electoral offences
- Prosecute offenders
- Seize assets used in electoral offences
- Protections for Accused Individuals

To ensure fairness, the commission will likely establish protections for accused individuals, including:

- Clear guidelines for investigations and prosecutions
- Protection against arbitrary detention and prosecution
- Right to a fair hearing and representation.

representation.

The commission's structure and powers are still being discussed, and the National Assembly will need to finalize the details.

Specific Powers and Structure of the Proposed Electoral Offences Commission

The proposed Electoral Offences Commission will have the power to investigate and prosecute electoral offences, including vote-buying, bribery, and undue influence. The commission will comprise a Chairman, a Secretary, 10 representatives from select government ministries and agencies, and six Nigerians

representing each geo-political zone, with at least two positions reserved for women.

Measures to Prevent Abuse of Power by the Commission

To prevent abuse of power, the commission will have clear guidelines for investigations and prosecutions, and an oversight body will review its decisions. The commission will also be accountable to the National Assembly and subject to judicial review.

Guidelines for Investigations and Prosecutions

The commission will investigate electoral offences, including vote-buying, bribery, and undue influence, and prosecute offenders. The guidelines will include:

- Investigating electoral offences and prosecuting offenders
- Seizing assets used in electoral offences
- Issuing summons to persons to appear in person or produce documents
- Examining persons and ordering production of documents

Oversight Body Structure and Empowerment

The oversight body will comprise representatives from government ministries and agencies, and will review the commission's decisions to ensure accountability

Protections for Accused Individuals

Accused individuals will have the right to a fair hearing, representation, and protection against arbitrary detention and prosecution.

Violence against Women and Girls: The childhood factor

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

So, just 3 days ago, a report came to me of a 28 year old lady who took charge of caring for her 11 year old niece after her elder sister's demise 4 years ago, and turned the little niece into a domestic help who doesn't deserve to live!

Neighbours called me to raise the alarm, being witnesses to a series of continuous abuse since she took charge of the little girl. They witnessed daily beatings, saw her locking up her niece in a warehouse and starving her every 2 or 3 days, and this unfortunate incidents had become worrisome sights for those around until they couldn't take the ugly trend anymore.

During the Easter weekend, while families were in a celebratory mood, Precious was also bearing her cross in Gologha!

Neighbours acted. They had decided that, "If you see something, you must say something!"

And that, "All die na die!"

Someone called to report the daily torture to me, and I didn't waste time in running to my organization, Standup for Women Society, SWS to report the matter; and with a joint petition signed by the Standup for Women Society, SWS, Edo state chapter and the African Women Lawyers, AWLA, supported by a report forwarded to the State Police Command by ace Crime Reporter, Comrade Festus Alenkhe who is also Chairman of the Nigeria Union of

Journalists, NUJ, Edo State Council after yours truly personally reported the matter to him, all agencies of change swung into action, and promptly, the Police and Advocates of Change stormed the residence of the "wicked auntie," and just as the analysis was given by neighbours, the 15 year old Precious was locked up in an old warehouse at the back of the house which doubled as both a living room and hairstyling centre.

She was looking emaciated, starved, pale eyed, and gasping from dehydration and hunger, her fresh wet wounds sticking to her dirty shirt and pants. Undressed, more horrible looking gashes formed on her tender and red skin, toughened by years of unexplained punishments, torture and suffering in the hands of her own aunt.

Sighting the rescue team, her eyes lit up with hope when she saw a group of women in company of uniformed and plain clothed police! She knew her secret prayers had been answered! And so it was!

Well, making statements to the police, the culprit gave us insights into her own background; she had also suffered abuse as a child, therefore, she took it as a norm, part of child upbringing.

She had stopped Precious from going to school because she was also denied formal education, hence she kept Precious behind to be helping her in her hair styling centre.

For 4 years none of her neighbours openly expressed their angst or misgivings against the way she treated the young Precious, so she felt it was a normal and acceptable way of instilling discipline on young ones, particu-



larly as she also had such treatment meted on her as a child.

While Precious is now united with the father and other family members, it is also necessary to ensure she gets the psychological, emotional and physical balance she would need in order to forget the 4 years of ordeal in the hands of her maternal aunt. It is important she grows up and not be like her aunt who sees violence and abuse as a way of life. We must disable her mind from such misconception. She must learn to love humanity, and that is on point!

It is also important for her to go to school and live a more meaningful life, get set for a brighter future. The organizations and society at large have that task to accomplish together.

Every well meaning individual

should help Precious become the good personality that the society needs her to be. The well rounded individual the society needs. Our organizations are following up on this.

We task every family, every single person, every unit of society where non-biological children are used as slaves to desist! No one deserves serfdom, even serfdom where slaves are well placed and respected is no longer in vogue! If you cannot take these young ones as your own, if you know you would end up treating them as less mortals, please, leave them alone! Even orphanages are better than your despicable household of cruelty! Don't bring them to your home as slaves!

Many young ones have died from

torture, cruelty meted out on them by cruel relatives and Madams and Ogas who see them as objects to toy with and cast away at will. That is wickedness, man's inhumanity to man, and it ought to stop!

Ask yourselves this salient question: if fate turns the hands of the clock and your child is treated same way, would you be happy? I doubt! Nay, I don't think so!

Let our humanity speak and act at all times in our dealings with fellow man! Let it be Loud! Posterity will reckon with you, and karma will visit you! Be wise! Be good! Be humane! Love humanity as you love yourself! See every child with the same lens you view yours. Tomorrow is pregnant.

Sports

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

New CAF GS Adamu vows integrity, professionalism

The new Acting General Secretary of the Confederation of African Football, Samson Adamu, has spoken of his intense desire to leave a lasting legacy as the chief operating officer of the beautiful game on the African continent.

Adamu was on Sunday, 29th March 2026 named CAF's Acting General Secretary, at the CAF Executive Committee held in Giza Palace Hotel in Cairo. His name was proposed by CAF President, Dr Patrice Motsepe and ratified by the Executive Committee.

Samson's passion for the game was obvious from a young age, and 15 years ago he launched an ambitious project – an invitational beach soccer tournament that drew the best teams from around the globe to Lagos, with the tournament held in an atmosphere of premium entertainment and best standards in administration, logistics, marketing, officiating and publicity. It was known as COPA Lagos, and was so successful that CAF easily saddled Nigeria with the hosting of the 2016 CAF Beach Soccer Cup of Nations.

His genuine passion, diligence, and people skills catapulted him to the offices of the Confederation of African Football in Cairo, where he started as Director of Competitions, before his elevation to Director of Tournaments and Events.

"I am elated by this appointment. I am determined to serve African Football with humility, integrity, and professionalism," Adamu told thenff.com.

He is the first Nigerian, nay West African, to mount the hottest seat in African football, in the 69-year history of the continent's governing body for the game.

Samson is the son of Dr Amos Adamu – a titan in Nigeria sports administration, African and World football for more than two decades. Dr Adamu served as Sole Administrator of then Nigeria Football Association (now Nigeria Football Federation) in the early 1990s, and as Director of Sports Development in the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports.

He was also the chief organizer of the 8th All-Africa Games that Nigeria hosted in the year 2003. The previous year, he won election into the CAF Executive Committee in Bamako, Mali and was re-elected on the margin of the 2004 Africa Cup of Nations finals in Tunisia.

In 2006, he won election into the FIFA Executive Committee, and also served as Director General of the National Sports Commission. All these, alongside playing key roles in Nigeria's hosting of the FIFA World Youth Championship (now FIFA U20 World Cup) in 1999, and the country's co-hosting of the 2000 Africa Cup of Nations finals with Ghana.

Samson Adamu



SAMSON ADAMU

Poland 2026: Falconets resume camp in Abuja for Malawi

Players and officials of Nigeria's U20 Women's National Team, Falconets, have officially resumed camp in Abuja as preparations intensify for the final round of the qualifiers for this year's FIFA U20 Women's World Cup finals.

Some of the invited players reported to camp on Monday, 6th April 2026, while training sessions commenced on Tuesday, 7th April 2026. The team has since begun intensive training aimed at building fitness, cohesion, and tactical discipline ahead of the crucial encounter, while the technical crew awaits the arrival of the remaining invited players.

During the opening session, the team's Head Coach, Moses Aduku, addressed the players, urging them to remain focused, committed, and fully prepared for the task ahead. He emphasized the importance of discipline, teamwork, and determination as the team prepares to face a determined Malawian side. The players have expressed strong optimism and readiness as preparations continue in camp, with the technical crew working to ensure the team attains peak condition for the qualifiers.

It can be recalled that the Malawi team progressed to the final qualifying round after edging past Guinea Bissau in their previous fixture. The Falconets are now set to face the Malawian side in the first leg in Nigeria on Saturday, 2nd May, with the return leg in Malawi a week later.

Africa will produce four representatives at the 2026 FIFA U20 Women's World Cup, scheduled to take place in Poland, 5th – 26th September 2026.



SUPER FALCONS IN TRAINING

2026 National Schools Football Championship Gains Momentum as Registrations hit Milestone

Preparations have gathered pace for the 2026 National Schools Football Championship, with a surge in registrations marking a major milestone ahead of the nationwide competition.

The tournament, endorsed by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and the National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), aims to provide a structured platform for students to showcase their talents while strengthening the pipeline for Nigeria's Under-15 and Under-17 national teams.

The competition will kick off in May across the 36 states and the FCT, with schools competing at state level before advancing to regional stages. Winners from the six geopolitical zones will then converge in Abuja for the grand finale in June 2026, featuring both boys' and girls' teams.

Speaking on the initiative, CEO of Kickstart Sports Foundation, Ibrahim Bello, described the project as a long-term investment in Nigerian football, focused not only on talent discovery but also on structured development. He added that standout players will undergo advanced training under top coaches and gain exposure to local and international scouts.

Bello also highlighted the collaboration with key stakeholders, including the NFF, noting that national team coaches, as well as international academies and clubs, will scout players during the tournament.

He further explained that the championship is a landmark initiative, being fully age-verified, safeguarded, and gender-inclusive, with participation restricted strictly to school-based athletes. The use of NIMC-integrated biometric verification is also expected to eliminate age fraud and ensure credibility in the competition.

The competition will also provide an opportunity for Physical Education teachers from participating schools to receive training and obtain certified football coaching licenses.



Why NNL moved 2025/2026 Season Finale to April 15

The Nigeria National League has officially announced a change to the date of the final round of fixtures for the 2025/2026 season, shifting the conclusion from April 12 to April 15.

The adjustment, confirmed by NNL chairman George Aluo, is aimed at ensuring the smooth completion of all outstanding matches before the decisive final round of the campaign.

According to Aluo, the league body opted for the extension to allow pending fixtures to be played, thereby enabling the last set of matches to take place simultaneously across all centres.

"We've adjusted our season programme so that the league will now end on April 15 instead of the earlier scheduled

date of April 12," Aluo said.

"This decision was taken to ensure that all outstanding matches are cleared before the final games of the season, which will be played at the same time."

The move is also intended to uphold fairness and integrity in the competition, particularly with promotion and relegation places still at stake.

In addition, the league has taken steps to strengthen officiating in the closing stages of the season by appointing referees from the Nigeria Premier Football League to handle key fixtures.

Aluo noted that the measures are designed to guarantee a level playing field for all competing teams as the season reaches its conclusion



Akiotu emerges clear favourite as BON elects new Chairman in Abuja



TONY ANEGBE AKIOTU

MAXWELL KUMOYE

All roads lead to Abuja as the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON) holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM) where they will be electing new chairman on April 8 at Hawthorn Suites, Area 11, Garki.

But beyond the formalities of the gathering, attention has firmly settled on one man widely regarded as the preferred choice to lead the nation's apex broadcast body, Tony Anegebe Akiotu.

With the theme, "The Management of the Airwaves: An Assessment of the 2026 Nigerian Electoral Act on Broadcast Media Coverage of the Elections," the AGM will bring together key stake-

holders across Nigeria's broadcast landscape, with the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Idris Mohammed, billed as Special Guest of Honour.

The election marks the end of a two-year tenure by outgoing chairman, Salihu Abdullahi Dembos, whose leadership followed BON's tradition of rotating the chairmanship between public and private sectors.

With the baton now set to return to the private sector, Akiotu's emergence appears not only timely but widely endorsed.

Industry consultations and sentiment tracking among broadcast executives over the past month point overwhelmingly in Akiotu's favour.

His lone challenger, Raymond Dokpesi Jr., faces an uphill task against a candidate whose credentials span nearly four decades of impactful service.

Akiotu's deep-rooted relationship with the broadcast media, cultivated over the years has become a defining strength in his candidacy.

From his early days in the newsroom of Radio Nigeria to his influential years in the boardroom of Daar Communications Plc, where he served as Group Managing Director for 15 years, his journey reflects both experience and resilience.

A multiple national award-winning journalist and consummate professional, Akiotu has also played pivotal roles within the Nigerian Guild of Editors, serving for over a decade in various capacities up to Deputy President.

Within BON itself, he has spent more than 10 years in the executive council and success-

fully led the organisation's Sports Committee, further cementing his reputation as a steady and results-driven administrator.

Currently, as Chairman/CEO of M4STV Communications Ltd, Akiotu is at the forefront of innovation in Nigeria's evolving media space.

The platform has distinguished itself as a dynamic broadcast and digital streaming hub, seamlessly integrating traditional linear television with cutting-edge OTT services.

M4STV has also become the go-to station for live Nigeria Professional Football League matches and coverage involving the national teams, underscoring Akiotu's enduring influence in sports broadcasting.

Colleagues and stakeholders alike point to his unmatched institutional knowledge and his ability to bridge generations of broadcasters as key reasons behind his broad and widespread support base.

Super Eagles to face Portugal, Poland in June friendlies

EDWARD OSEGHE

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has confirmed that the Super Eagles will take on Poland and Portugal in international friendly matches during the FIFA June window.

Nigeria's clash with Poland is scheduled for June 3 at Warsaw's PGE Narodowy Stadium. The venue for the June 10 meeting against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal is yet to be finalised, according to NFF FIFA Match Agent, Jairo Pachon of Eurodata Sport.

"We are always looking to arrange competitive fixtures for the national team during every FIFA window," Pachon told ESPN.

The friendly against Portugal will serve as the European champions' final preparation before heading to the United States, Canada, and Mexico for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Poland, like Nigeria, will miss out on this year's global tournament.

NFF Director of Communications, Ademola Olajire also confirmed the fixtures in a media statement released on Thursday. He expressed optimism about the upcoming summer schedule, highlighting the Super Eagles' recent outings in Antalya, Turkey, where they defeated Iran and drew with Jordan—both World Cup-bound nations.

Those matches were originally planned as part of a four-nation mini-tournament

in Amman, Jordan, but had to be relocated due to ongoing conflicts in the Gulf region.

Pachon praised the cooperation between federations, saying, "We are grateful to the teams for trusting us to make these games happen."

Before the June friendlies, the Super Eagles are set to return to London to defend the Unity Cup title they claimed last summer. Details regarding participating teams in this year's tournament, scheduled for May 26-30, are yet to be released.



SUPER EAGLES

Plateau United Surge, Abia Warriors Dream Big as NPFL Drama Unfolds

With just 10 points separating 17th-placed Remo Stars and 10th-placed Warri Wolves, the Nigeria Premier Football League season is hurtling to-

ward a dramatic finish—where every game could decide who stays and who falls.

The Sky Blues are rediscovering their rhythm, while Enyimba FC—the People's El-

phant—have found their bite again, refusing to go down without a fight, as shown in their gritty outing in Lafia.

Plateau United, under the guidance of Gbenga Ogunbote, are clawing their way out of danger with authority, dismantling Ikorodu City 4-1. Goals from Kazeem Adeyanju, a brace by Ossy Martins, and a late strike from Victor Dawa sealed a commanding win, despite a consolation from Moses Ali.

In Aba, Abia Warriors kept their continental dream alive with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Bayelsa United. Emeka Obioma's decisive strike lifted them to fourth, intensifying the race for continental spots.



ABIA WARRIORS TEAM

Motsepe heads to Senegal for high-level talks with President Faye, FA Boss



DR PATRICE MOTSEPE

EDWARD OSEGHE

The President of the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), Dr Patrice Motsepe, is scheduled to visit Senegal on Wednesday for a series of high-level engagements with the country's leadership and football authorities.

During the visit, Dr Motsepe will meet with Senegal's Head of State, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, as well as the President of the Fédération Sénégalaise de Football, Abdoulaye Fall, in discussions expected to focus on the development and advancement of football in the country and across the continent.

Mourinho committed to Benfica despite title setback

EDWARD OSEGHE

José Mourinho has confirmed his intention to remain at Benfica next season, even as the club's hopes of claiming the Primeira Liga crown appear to be fading.

Speaking after Monday's 1-1 draw with Casa Pia, the Portuguese coach, who returned to his homeland in September after 21 years abroad, acknowledged that Benfica's title challenge is all but over.

"The decision is mine, and my choice is to continue at Benfica," Mourinho stated, addressing speculation about a possible summer exit. His current contract runs until June 2027, though it includes a clause allowing him to depart early.

Benfica remain unbeaten in the league but trail leaders FC Porto by seven points with just six games remaining. Sporting CP occupy second place, two points ahead of Benfica and with a game in hand.

"You say we dropped two

points; I would say we've lost our last chance to fight for the title," Mourinho admitted.

"We are no longer fully in control of our destiny. Even if we win all remaining matches—which is difficult but possible—Sporting would need to drop points. The aim now is to fight for second place," he said.

Mourinho criticized his squad's first-half performance against Casa Pia and emphasized the need for tactical adjustments.

"At halftime, we discussed changes, because some players seemed to have lost touch with the realities of football. I even did a bit of maths for them. If we hadn't won this game, the title would be gone," he stated.

Despite frustrations with certain players, Mourinho stressed the importance of managing the squad carefully.

"There are higher values at stake. Some players are assets I would consider sidelining, but the sporting goal remains to finish second, depending on other results," he added.



JOSÉ MOURINHO

SPORTS

Maguire commits future to Manchester United with new contract



HARRY MAGUIRE

EDWARD OSEGHE

Manchester United defender Harry Maguire has committed his future to the club, signing a new contract that extends his stay at Old Trafford.

The England international, who was set to become a free agent at the end of the season, has agreed to an initial one-year deal running until June 2027, with an option for an additional 12 months.

Maguire expressed his pride

in continuing with the club, saying: "Representing Manchester United is the ultimate honour. It is a responsibility that makes myself and my family proud every single day. I am delighted to extend my journey at this incredible club to at least eight seasons and continue to play in front of our special supporters to create more amazing moments together."

"You can feel the ambition and potential of this exciting squad. The determination throughout the whole club to fight for major trophies is clear, and I am confident that our best moments together remain ahead of us."

Jason Wilcox, Manchester United's Director of Football, praised the 33-year-old defender for his leadership and professionalism.

"Harry represents the mental-

ity and resilience required to perform for Manchester United. He is the ultimate professional who brings invaluable experience and leadership to our young, ambitious squad. Like everyone at the club, he is completely determined to help Manchester United achieve regular and sustained success," Wilcox said.

Maguire joined United from Leicester City in a record £80 million (\$106 million) transfer in 2019. Since then, he has made 266 appearances for the Red Devils, scoring 17 goals.

The defender has been instrumental in Manchester United's recent resurgence under caretaker manager Michael Carrick. His strong performances since January earned him a recall to the England squad for the March internationals against Uruguay and Japan.

Makhmudov confident ahead of Fury clash despite uncertainty over strategy

EDWARD OSEGHE

Arslanbek Makhmudov insists he can overcome Tyson Fury this weekend, even if he cannot fully explain how he plans to do it.

The Dagestan-born, Canada-based heavyweight will face the former two-time world champion at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Saturday in what promises to be one of boxing's most anticipated matchups.

"I don't know how I will beat Fury, but I believe I will win."

"He is a legend, one of the best heavyweights in history," Makhmudov told The Guardian.

Makhmudov acknowledged Fury's mastery of both the mental and technical aspects of boxing.

"Tyson Fury is the professor of mind and boxing. A lot of boxing is mental, and he is a master. But boxing is also spiritual. I am going to be strong, spiritual, and smart."

"You can say this is a war between mental and spiritual—and we'll see who comes out on top. Inshallah, it will be spiritual," he said.

With a professional record of 21 wins and just two defeats, including 19 knockouts, Makhmudov recognizes Fury's

experience and boxing intelligence as his toughest challenge yet. He cited Fury's previous victories over Wladimir Klitschko and Deontay Wilder as proof of his opponent's exceptional skill and ring awareness.

As fight night approaches, all eyes will be on whether Makhmudov's blend of physical strength and spiritual focus can topple one of boxing's modern greats.



ARSLANBEK MAKHMUDOV AND TYSON FURY

Sport unites youth, drives peace, development —Stakeholders

Stakeholders have highlighted sport's role in promoting unity, peace and development, urging young people to embrace it as a pathway to nation-building.

They spoke on Monday at a mini-tournament marking the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, organised by Playing for Peace and Empowerment Initiative (PP&EI) in Abuja.

Established by the UN General Assembly, the annual observance on April 6 promotes sport's power to drive social change, community development, peace and mutual un-

derstanding.

The event, with the theme, 'Sports: Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers,' reflects focus on inclusion, cohesion and breaking societal divisions.

Dr Osamwonyi Omazuwa, Country Director of PP&EI, described the initiative as a strategic platform for fostering national development through sport.

He urged young players to see sport beyond competition and accolades, noting its role in physical fitness, mental resilience and character development.

"What you are doing goes beyond competing for honours; you are building your body and

strengthening your mind.

"On the field, you inculcate humane values that contribute to development and unity."

"On the field, ethnicity and religion fade; you see yourselves as team players, values essential for building our country," Omazuwa said.

He urged participants to see the bigger picture, stressing that sport helps bridge insecurity gaps and contributes to national development.

Dr Chris Achem, Team Lead of the tournament, said the initiative aimed to raise young players as ambassadors of peace through sport.

Okonkwo cleared to represent Nigeria after FIFA approval

FIFA has officially approved goalkeeper Arthur Okonkwo's international switch from England to Nigeria, clearing the path for him to represent the Super Eagles.

The Wrexham FC shot-stopper, who previously represented England at youth levels, has now completed all necessary documentation to change his international allegiance.

With the approval secured, the 22-year-old is immediately eligible for selection by the Nigeria national team ahead of upcoming international fixtures.

Okonkwo has been in excellent form for Wrexham this season, and his addition is expected to significantly strengthen Nigeria's goalkeeping department as the Super Eagles prepare for major competitions.

Nigeria's technical team can now evaluate Okonkwo alongside the current goalkeepers, intensifying the competition for the number one jersey.

This development is a major boost for the Super Eagles, who continue to strengthen the squad with talented players eligible to switch allegiance.



ARTHUR OKONKWO

Egypt to host African Women's Volleyball Championships



EGYPT WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Egypt is set to take centre stage in African volleyball as it prepares to host the 2026 Women's African Volleyball Club Championship, with top clubs across the continent battling for honours.

The prestigious tournament, organised by the Confederation of African Volleyball, will bring together elite women's club sides to compete for continental glory and qualification opportunities for global com-

petitions.

Host nation Egypt is expected to field strong representatives, banking on home support and experience to challenge for the title against traditional powerhouses from across Africa.

The championship serves as a vital platform for showcasing the growth of women's volleyball on the continent, while also providing clubs with the opportunity to gain international exposure.