

Jubilation in Ubiaja as Edo Security Squad demolishes alleged kidnappers den

RICHARD EWEKA

UBIAJA

Residents of Ubiaja in Esan South-East Local Government Area of Edo State erupted in jubilation on Thursday as the Edo State Special Security Squad demolished a building allegedly used as a hideout for kidnapping and drug-related activities linked to suspected kidnap

kingpin, Jerry Okoyomo.

The demolition drew a large crowd of residents who praised the state government, describing the action as a major breakthrough in the fight against criminality in the area.

Chairman of the Special Security Squad, Noah Paddy Idemudia, said the building was uncovered during investigations into a recent kidnapping incident in Irrua which led to the arrest of

nine suspected kidnappers.

"This house was identified during investigations into the recent kidnapping incident in Irrua which led to the arrest of nine suspected kidnappers," he said.

Idemudia disclosed that preliminary investigations revealed that the property allegedly served as an operational base for kidnapping and illegal drug activities. He stressed that the Edo State Government re-

mained resolute in its determination to rid the state of criminal elements.

He warned individuals involved in criminal activities to desist or face the full weight of the law, adding that the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo would continue to track down criminals and dismantle structures linked to crime across the state.

"The Edo State Government

under Governor Monday Okpebholo will not relent in fishing out criminals and destroying all structures linked to criminal activities across the state," he said.

Idemudia also urged landlords and property owners to carry out proper profiling and background checks on prospective tenants before renting out their properties, noting that negligence often provides safe havens for criminals.

"We also advise landlords to

properly profile individuals before renting out their houses. Some of these criminals hide under false identities to carry out illegal activities," he added.

Residents who witnessed the demolition expressed relief and commended Governor Okpebholo for what they described as bold action against insecurity in the community.

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That The People May Know

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#200

Jonathan to consult widely on 2027 presidential bid

ABUJA

Former President Goodluck Jonathan says he will consult widely before deciding whether to join the 2027 presidential race, following mounting calls by a section of Nigerian youths urging him to return to office.

Jonathan made the declaration on Thursday in Abuja when thousands of youths, under the aegis of "The Coalition for Jonathan 2027," gathered at his office to appeal to him to contest on the platform of any political party of his choice.

The former president, who was received with loud cheers

by the protesters, stressed that seeking the nation's highest office was a serious undertaking that required broad consultations with stakeholders.

"Contesting presidency is not a computer game.

"I've heard from the young people. I will consult. I cannot just wake up and say I want

to be the president of Nigeria again. But I'm telling you that I will consult. If there is need to, fine," he said.

Jonathan commended the protesters for what he described as their patriotism, noting that their interest in the country's leadership represented hope for Nigeria's future.

He, however, urged them to move beyond advocacy to active participation in the democratic process by obtaining their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and participating in elections.

The former president expressed concern over low voter turnout in Nigeria, saying the country recorded one of the

lowest voter participation rates among nations where he had served as an international election observer.

Jonathan noted that he had observed elections in more than 14 African countries and parts of South-East Asia,

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>



A COURTESY VISIT:

General Manager of Bendel Newspapers Corporation (BNC), publishers of *The Observer* titles, Hon Peter Odiboh (left) presenting a copy of *The Nigerian Observer* newspaper to the Provost, Edo State College of Nursing Services, Mrs. Mabel Omobude, when Odiboh led the management team of the newspaper company on a courtesy visit to the College recently. Photo: Moses Oboh

Edo to airlift 95 intending pilgrims for 2026 Hajj May 18

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Pilgrim Welfare Board says the 95 intending pilgrims from the state for the 2026 Holy pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia will be airlifted on May 18.

Executive Secretary of the board, Alhaji Muhammadkibir Eranga, disclosed this on Thursday in Benin City during an interview with journalists.

Eranga said all necessary arrangements had been concluded to ensure a smooth and hitch-free Hajj exercise for the intending pilgrims.

"We have informed the intending pilgrims that the camping starts on May 15 in Benin City, before leaving for Lagos on May 17, for onward movement to Saudi Arabia for

the Hajj exercise," he said.

He disclosed that the board had secured accommodation, catering and transportation services, among other logistics, for the pilgrims.

"We are doing our final screening today for all the intending pilgrims across the state to ensure that everything is in order before departing for the pilgrimage," he said.

According to him, visas had also been secured for those participating in the Hajj operation.

Eranga explained that although Edo State was allocated 351 slots for the pilgrimage, only 95 persons completed payment before the deadline fixed by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

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Coach decries poor infrastructure in grassroots volleyball —Pg 23

Senate reverses amended standing rules, retains previous provisions ● *Passes 2026 Electoral Act Amendment bill*

CAROLINE AMEH WITH
AGENCY REPORT

ABUJA

The Senate on Thursday rescinded the earlier amendments to Orders 2(2) and 3(1) of the Senate Standing Orders 2023 (as amended), retaining previous rules after the emergence of constitutional concerns.

The senate had recently amended the standing rules, restricting principal leadership positions exclusively to lawmakers serving, at least, second terms.

The revised provisions stated that only serving 10th Senate lawmakers re-elected during the 2027 elections would qualify to contest principal officer positions.

Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele (Ekiti Central), moved the motion for rescission and re-committal of Orders 2(2) and 3(1) during plenary proceedings on Thursday in Abuja, with the Minority Leader, Abba Moro (Benue South), seconding it.

Bamidele said further legislative and constitutional reviews revealed possible conflicts with provisions of Nigeria's Constitution, particularly Section 52, necessitating immediate parliamentary corrections.

He said that the senate retained authority to revisit, rescind and recommit previously-concluded

matters to protect legislative integrity, parliamentary convention and legislative practice.

The senate subsequently rescinded its earlier decision regarding amendments to Orders 2(2) and 3(1) of the senate standing orders and retained previous provisions.

Deputy Senate President, Jibrin Barau, who presided over the plenary, described the motion as straightforward and necessary for ensuring compliance with constitutional provisions.

"This is a very straightforward motion; it's just for us to go in conformity with the con-

stitution. I thank the leader for being observant and up to his game as the leader of the senate by making this observation.

"It is something that is very clear and we don't need any debate in respect of this," Barau said.

In a swift reaction, Sen. Adams Oshiomhole criticised the manner through which the initial amendments were passed, insisting that the lawmakers rushed the process without allowing extensive debates.

"The way we rushed the rules, because certain people wanted certain things concluded, is one flaw to this process.

"That is just the point I want to make. Next time, we should

allow for robust debates," Oshiomhole said.

Bamidele raised a point of order under Rule 52(6), cautioning senators against revisiting concluded matters without presenting substantive rescission motions before the senate.

"If His Excellency, Distinguished Sen. Adams Oshiomhole had any problem with the decisions that were taken with respect to the amendment two days ago, what he was expected to do was to bring a substantive motion for rescission to be debated on the floor of this parliament.

"The drama witnessed in the chamber the previous day had overshadowed substantive legislative business," he said.

Jonathan to consult widely on...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

insisting that Nigeria's voter turnout remained alarmingly low in percentage terms.

"I have never been to a country that has the low numbers we have, in terms of percentage of voter turnout.

"I think the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) needs to do something about it. Their consultants need to study the root causes of voter apathy and find lasting solutions to it.

"As young people, you must be involved in the electoral process.

"If I ask how many of you have your voter cards now, probably 50 per cent of you don't even have your voter cards, and you're asking me to go and contest the presidential election.

"So, you must participate in the electoral process," he said.

Jonathan also urged youths to remain patriotic and committed to peace-building, saying patriotic citizens contributed to national development while unpatriotic citizens destroyed nations.

He pledged to continue advocating for peaceful and credible elections, describing them as essential for citizens' participation in governance and politics.

"I will continue to advocate

for peaceful and credible elections in the country, because if we don't have peaceful and credible elections, citizens will not want to bother or get involved in politics," he said.

The former president also decried the growing "Japa" syndrome involving the migration of young Nigerians abroad in search of greener pastures, as well as the negative perception of Nigerians in some foreign countries.

According to him, the prosperity enjoyed by developed countries today was the product of deliberate and long-term planning by successive leaders.

"The Japa syndrome in Nigeria has to stop. The highest level of disdain shown to Nigerian youths abroad has to stop.

"Even African countries that we helped; African countries that even, when we were students, we were contributing part of our scholarship money to solve their problems.

"They now see Nigeria as if we are a bunch of idiots and criminals, because probably we leaders have not been able to build our country, give hope to our young people and even attract others to come here and work.

"This is the task that faces all Nigerian leaders. These things could be done by any other person, not necessarily Jonathan," he said.

Jubilation in Ubiaja as Edo...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Many said the building had long been notorious for suspicious activities, with residents living in fear due to frequent movements around the area.

"We are very happy today. This house has been a hideout for criminals for a long time and people have been living in fear," a resident said.

"We thank Governor Monday Okpebholo for taking this bold action. This demolition has brought relief to the community," another resident added.

Earlier at the Ubiaja Police Station, security operatives paraded suspects arrested in connection with the case.

One of the suspects, Musa Mohammadu, who spoke through an interpreter, claimed he was brought from northern Nigeria under the pretext of securing a cattle-rearing job. According to him, he became suspicious after discovering there was no cattle business and noticing questionable activities among those who brought him

to the area.

"I was brought here from the North to rear cattle, but when I got here, I discovered there was no cattle work. I became uncomfortable because of the suspicious activities going on around the place and I told them I wanted to return before the police arrested us," he said.

The prime suspect, Jerry Okoyomo, however denied involvement in kidnapping, insisting that he was only involved in the sale of hard drugs.

A victim allegedly kidnapped by the gang also narrated her ordeal to journalists, recounting how she was held in the bush during captivity. She alleged that one of the suspects moved freely within the community and only visited the hideout occasionally to supervise operations and monitor victims.

The latest crackdown is seen as another major step by the Governor Monday Okpebholo administration to curb criminal activities and restore public confidence in the security of lives and property across Edo State.



DEMOLITION IN UBIAJA:

Edo State Special Security Squad demolishing a building that serves as kidnappers den in Ubiaja, Esan South East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Edo pilgrims told to brace for Saudi heat ahead of 2026 Hajj

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, has stressed that understanding the harsh weather conditions in Saudi Arabia is crucial to the success and safety of pilgrims participating in the 2026 Hajj exercise.

Uduimoh gave the advice in Benin City while addressing intending pilgrims from Edo State ahead of their departure to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He noted that the intense heat currently being experienced in the Holy Land makes it imperative for pilgrims to take health precautions seriously in order to avoid heat exhaustion and other related health complications during the spiritual exercise.

According to him, proper preparation and strict adherence to safety measures would enable pilgrims to carry out their religious obligations without unnecessary health challenges.

Also speaking, the Executive

Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar, urged the intending pilgrims to prioritise their health and safety throughout the pilgrimage.

He advised them to drink plenty of fluids, use light-coloured umbrellas and ensure adequate rest, warning that heat exhaustion could hinder their ability to perform Hajj rites effectively.

Muhammadkabar further cautioned against prolonged exposure to direct sunlight and unnecessary movement during peak daytime hours when temperatures are usually at their highest.

He added that strict com-

pliance with health and safety guidelines issued by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) and Saudi authorities would help guarantee a smooth and hitch-free pilgrimage for Edo pilgrims.

As part of preparations for the exercise, travel bags were distributed to the intending pilgrims to support their movement and ease their journey throughout the pilgrimage period.

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board also reassured intending pilgrims of its commitment to their welfare, safety and overall wellbeing during the 2026 Hajj exercise.

Urologist dismisses claims linking frequent sex to lower prostate cancer risk

LAGOS

Consultant Urologist and Associate Professor at the College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Rufus Ojewola, has dismissed widespread misconceptions suggesting that frequent sexual activity can reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

Speaking in an interview with journalists in Lagos on Thursday, Ojewola said there was no scientific evidence supporting claims that prostate cancer was caused or prevent-

ed by sexual behaviour, multiple sexual partners or sexually transmitted infections.

"There have been insinuations and misconceptions about prostate cancer. Some people attribute it to spiritual attacks, multiple sexual partners and sexually transmitted diseases, but scientifically, these are not true," he said.

The urologist explained that the major risk factors associated with prostate cancer were ageing, race and heredity, noting that black men were more susceptible to the disease than men of other races.

According to him, family history also plays a significant role, as prostate cancer can run in families.

Ojewola urged men to prioritise regular medical screening and early diagnosis, stressing that awareness remained critical in reducing complications associated with prostate diseases.

He also advocated a multidisciplinary approach in the diagnosis, treatment and management of prostate cancer, saying effective care required collaboration among specialists from

different branches of medicine.

The medical expert said professionals such as urologists, haematologists, radiologists, laboratory scientists, radiographers and pathologists all contributed to comprehensive prostate cancer care.

"It takes more than one specialist to diagnose, treat and manage a patient with prostate disease," he said, adding that laboratory investigations and imaging studies such as ultrasound scans were often necessary for proper treatment planning and patient management.

NEWS**Okpebholo promises support for late ITV reporter's family****● Okpebholo promises support for late ITV reporter's family****BENIN CITY**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged government support for the family of late Independent Television and Radio (ITV) Government House Correspondent, Kingsley Uchegbu, assuring that the state would stand by them following the death of the journalist.

The governor gave the assurance during a condolence visit to the widow of the deceased, Mrs Chineyemara Uchegbu, at her residence in Benin City.

A delegation led by the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Yakubu Musa, conveyed the governor's message to the bereaved family.

Speaking during the visit, Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, said the Edo State Government would provide succour to the family in recognition of the late journalist's dedication and commitment to duty.

"Madam, we are here on behalf of the governor and we want to assure you that you will not be left alone in this difficult time. The government will be part of the process that will bring relief and support to you and your children," Afegbua said.

He described the late Uchegbu as a humble, committed and hardworking professional whose life and service left a positive impression on colleagues and associates.

"We are consoled by the fact that nobody here can speak ill of Kingsley. He was dedicated, committed, humble and lived a simple life.

"Please remain strong for your children because they are the ones who will continue the journey he could not complete before death took him away.

"You can imagine the distance he travelled daily to work, and that alone showed his resilience and dedication," he added.

Speaking on behalf of the family, an Elder at Winners Chapel, Dr Magnus Oshiohgwé, thanked the Edo State Government for the prompt condolence visit, describing it as a mark of honour and respect for the deceased.

He appealed to the government to extend further support to the family to help ease their pain.

"Whatever the government can do to support this family will go a long way in easing their burden. We appreciate the governor's gesture and the compassion shown through this visit," he said.

Oshiohgwé described the late journalist as a devoted church

member whose death had deeply affected members of the congregation.

According to him, pastors and church members had continued to rally around the family

since news of his death broke.

Until his death on Wednesday, May 7, 2026, after a brief illness, Kingsley Uchegbu was a staff member of Independent Television and Radio attached to the Government House Press.

He is survived by his wife, children and aged mother.

Members of the delegation included the Commissioner for Special Duties, Hon. Ken Ihenshenken; Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Dr Patrick Ebojele; Special Adviser to the Governor on Electronic Media, Paul Ezenwa; and members of the Government House Press Corps.

FG pledges affordable exams as NECO marks 25yrs**ABUJA**

Vice-President Kashim Shettima has reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to keeping national examinations affordable while strengthening integrity, innovation and global competitiveness in Nigeria's assessment system.

Speaking on Thursday at the 25th anniversary celebration of National Examinations Council in Abuja, Shettima said credible examination systems were critical to building quality human capital and expanding opportunities for Nigerian youths.

Represented by his Senior Special Assistant on Legal and Compliance, Bashir Maidugu, the Vice-President stressed that examination bodies must remain accessible to ordinary Nigerians because education remains the bedrock of national development.

"A nation that invests in credible assessment systems invests directly in the quality of its human capital and the future of its society," he said.

He added that the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu remained committed to creating an enabling environment for educational institutions to thrive and for Nigerian students to compete confidently on the global stage.

According to Shettima, NECO was established 25

years ago with the mandate of providing a standardised, credible and nationally owned examination framework capable of assessing students with fairness, integrity and global relevance.

Former Head of State, Abdulsalami Abubakar, represented by former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Zubairu Dada, commended NECO for strengthening educational assessment and promoting credibility in Nigeria's education sector over the years.

He noted that beyond conducting examinations, the council had contributed to education policy and planning through credible data generation that supports policy decisions and resource allocation.

Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, described NECO's 25-year journey as pivotal to Nigeria's educational development, saying the council had expanded access to examinations and restored public confidence in national certification.

Alausa disclosed that the Federal Government's plan to migrate examinations to computer-based testing would improve transparency through real-time monitoring and tracking of candidates' activities.

According to him, digital technology had reduced examination fraud by 90 per cent in 2026, expressing optimism that malpractice could be completely eradicated by 2027.

Edo to airlift 95 intending pilgrims...**«CONTINUED FROM PG 1**

"We were given 351 slots but 95 persons were able to make payment before the deadline set by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria's (NAHCON)," he said.

The executive secretary further disclosed that about 100

persons who paid after the deadline in anticipation of an extension would not participate in this year's exercise.

He said the affected persons had been advised either to apply for refunds or allow the board to retain their payments for consideration in next year's Hajj exercise.

Abuja commuters groan as fuel price fluctuations worsen hardship**ABUJA**

Residents and commuters across the Federal Capital Territory have lamented the persistent fluctuation in fuel prices, describing the situation as economically crippling and mentally exhausting.

In separate interviews on Thursday, many residents said the unstable pump prices had made daily transportation and household planning increasingly difficult.

Over the past week, petrol prices reportedly moved from about ₦1,200 per litre to ₦1,275 and later ₦1,350 before drop-

ping slightly in some filling stations. In other outlets, motorists said Premium Motor Spirit now sells for as high as ₦1,500 per litre, while kerosene has climbed to about ₦2,100 per litre.

A commercial bus passenger and estate supervisor, Mr Muntari Suleman, said transportation now consumes a large portion of his monthly earnings.

"I spend close to ₦4,000 daily on transport and I earn less than ₦150,000 monthly. After transport and feeding, almost nothing is left," he said.

Suleman noted that food inflation had already been rising before tensions linked to the

Iran-United States situation escalated, arguing that higher global oil prices should ordinarily benefit Nigeria as an oil-producing nation.

Another commuter, Mr Timothy Bada, said he had been forced to reassess his lifestyle because of rising fuel costs.

"At some point, I was earning ₦300,000 but spending about ₦120,000 monthly on fuel alone. The economy no longer reflects what people are earning," he said.

A civil servant, Mrs Rose Ameh, said transport fares increased almost immediately after fuel prices changed.

A'ibom partners foundation to end open defecation**NSIT UBUIUM**

Governor Umo Eno has announced a partnership between the Akwa Ibom State Government and the Blueway Ocean Foundation to combat open defecation in the state.

The governor made this known on Thursday during the inauguration of six toilet systems and a borehole facility at Community Comprehensive Secondary

School, Ikot Ekpene Udo, in Nsit Ubium Local Government Area.

Represented by the Commissioner for Water and Sanitation, Mr Ubuo Ubuo, Eno said access to safe water, sanitation and the eradication of open defecation formed part of the administration's ARISE Agenda.

"I am announcing the foundation as our official partner in the campaign against open defecation in the state," he said.

The governor commended the Blueway Ocean Foundation for promoting a healthy and hygienic environment, adding that the projects would improve students' health and sanitation.

He also said the government's ARISE Golden Initiative for All was delivering water projects across the state and urged corporate organisations to support sim-

ilar interventions as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Chief Executive Officer of the Blueway Ocean Foundation, Mr Iniodu Ndada, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to humanitarian service, stressing that government required support from corporate organisations and wealthy individuals to better serve society.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **VICTORIA JAMES-UMUDE**, now wish to be known as **OMOVUDU VICTORIA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MUOBOGHARE PATIENCE OGHENERUKEVWE**, now wish to be known as **OGHENERUKEVWE UHUNOMA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS AGBONIFO ESOHE MARVINS**, now wish to be known as **MRS. ALFRED MARVINS ESOHE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS EBOAGU GLADYS NDIDI**, now wish to be known as **MRS. EZEMWENGHIAN GLADYS NDIDI**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EDITH IDAHOSA**, now wish to be known as **ANTHONIA OSAGIE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MRS. UWAILA OSATO PAUL ATOE**, now wish to be known as **MRS. UWAILA ATOE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **PRECIOUS ESEOGHENE MICHAEL**, now wish to be known as **PRECIOUS ESEOGHENE AKPOROVWOWO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that **OKORO CHUKWUEMEKE. D** and **FRED CHUKWUEMEKE CELESTINE**, refers to the same person. I am now called **FRED CHUKWUEMEKE CELESTINE** and my correct date of birth is **11/5/1997** and not **5/11/1992** as wrongly written on my WAEC certificate. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

MISSING LAND DOCUMENT

The general public is hereby notified that I, **Rachael Omokaro** is the bonafide and lawful owner of a piece/parcel of land, measuring 49ft by 58ft, consisting of five rooms and a parlour, lying, situate and known as **No. 4 Eki Lane off Eki Street, Benin City, Edo State**.

The property was handed over to me by my father, late **Mr Ogieriakhi Omokaro** and I gave the documents to my mother, **Victoria Igbinosun** for safe keeping. At the death of my mother in **January 9, 2026**, the documents was discovered missing in Benin City, and all efforts to trace it has proved abortive, hence this publication for record purposes. The property is not for sale. **Buyers Beware!**

The general public and concerned authorities take note.

Signed: **RACHAEL OMOKARO**

MISSING LAND DOCUMENT

The general public is hereby notified that I, **Kelvin Ezemwenghian Emmanuel** is the lawful owner of a piece/parcel of land, measuring 100ft by 100ft, lying and situate at **Obagie-N'evbosa Community, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Edo State**, from one **Mr Ekhatore Augustine** vide through a deed of transfer dated **April 12, 2019**. With a certificate of occupancy **No. EDL59476**, registered as 149, page 1 in volume 33 at the certificate of occupancy digital register at EDOGIS registry office, Edo State with **Survey Plan No. BSE 122/2020** dated **November 10, 2020**.

The original documents of the **Deed of Transfer** was discovered missing sometimes in **April 2026** in **Benin City**, and efforts to trace it has proved abortive, hence this publication for record purposes. The property is not for sale. **Buyers Beware!**

The general public and concerned authorities take note.

Signed:



KELVIN EZEMWENGHIAN EMMANUEL

NEWS

Alleged N33.8bn fraud: Court convicts ex-Power Minister Mamman in absentia, orders his arrest

ANJAA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Thursday convicted the former Minister of Power, Mr Saleh Mamman, over alleged money laundering offences to the tune of N33.8 billion.

Justice James Omotosho, in a judgment, also issued a warrant of arrest against Mamman, who was conspicuously absent in court.

Justice Omotosho ordered that the ex-minister be produced in court by the next adjourned date by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for sentencing.

The judge then adjourned the matter until May 13 for the convict to be sentenced.

The order followed an application by EFCC's lawyer, Rotimi Oyedepo, SAN, shortly after Mamman was found guilty of the 12-counts charge and convicted accordingly.

"We are very grateful my lord for the well delivered judgment.

"Section 352 of Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015, particularly Sub 5, talks about the power of the honourable court to impose sentence when a defendant is arrested or surrendered himself to court.

"We therefore ask for arrest warrant and a date for sentencing my lord," he said.

However, Mamman's lawyer, Mohammed Ahmed, begged the court for an adjournment to enable his client present himself.

But when the judge asked Ahmed when he felt the defendant could be contacted to appear in court, the lawyer said he would contact the ex-minister's personal assistant.

"I delivered the judgment because you said you didn't

know how long it will take you to get the defendant and the court cannot continue to wait.

"This is an attempt to arrest the judgment.

"It is an attempt by counsel to arrest the judgment which the court will not fall into," he said.

The judge then directed the parties to take a date for the sentencing but Ahmed restated that the defence team had been unable to reach their client.

"We will do our possible best to inform his P. A. my lord," he said.

"So you don't have access to him? And you want the court to adjourn until when?" the judge asked.

Responding, Oyedepo said it was obvious that in view of Ahmed's statement, he cannot get Mamman.

"Therefore, we will be asking for his arrest warrant. The defendant is now a convict my lord and we urge your lordship to issue the arrest warrant," he said.

Earlier, the judge delivered the judgement in Mamman's absence.

In the judgment, Justice Omotosho held that the EFCC had been able to establish the 12-count amended charge against the defendant beyond reasonable.

"The prosecution has established that, at least, N22 billion naira was siphoned by the defendant and his cronies.

"This is sufficient to sustain the charge. Consequently, the defendant is hereby convicted of Count 1 of the charge.

"The defence did not offer any credible evidence to rebut the evidence of the prosecution.

"Upon the unchallenged evidence of the prosecution, the court hereby convicts the defendant of Count 1 of the charge," Justice Omotosho said.

The judge held that Mamman's act of diverting funds meant for other purposes such as the Zu-

ngeru and Mambila Hydroelectric Power Project to his own use was quite an eyesore.

"The sheer greed of the defendant and his comrades in crime is nothing but a downright shameful thing.

"For defendant, who held a critical position such as Ministry

of Power, rather than being concerned with creating a legacy of solving the epileptic power supply in the country, the defendant began siphoning and converting monies for serious projects into private pockets.

"The defendant was living large at the expense of ordinary Nigerians who had suffered from the consequence of his malfeasance."

"Little wonder that Nigeria

has remained in darkness now," the judge said.

According to Justice Omotosho, I must say the defendant was ingenious in trying to hide his involvement by using proxy companies and accomplices to pick the funds for him.

"However, the diligent investigation of the prosecution was able to link him to the said funds.

"This court must salute the

detailed nature of the investigation carried out in this matter and for presenting a coherent and cogent case against the defendant.

"The defendant on the other hand is condemned for greedily converting public funds to his own use.

"In final analysis, the prosecution has established the 12-count charge against the defendant beyond reasonable doubt.



CUTTING OF A CAKE:

L-R: Senator Sharafadeen Alli; Senator Simon Lalong; Deputy Senate President, Jibrin Barau; Senate President, Godswill Akpabio; Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele; Senate Chief Whip, Tahir Monguno; and Senator Marshall Katung during the cutting of a cake to celebrate senators born in April and May at the Senate President's office in Abuja, yesterday.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

Court fixes June 19 for judgment in publisher's suit against NIPSS

ABUJA

The Federal High Court, Abuja, has fixed June 19 to deliver judgment in a suit filed by PRNigeria Publisher, Yushau Shuaib, challenging his withdrawal from Senior Executive Course 47, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, NIPSS, Kuru-Jos.

Justice Binta Nyako fixed the date after counsels adopted their written arguments for and against the suit.

At the resumed hearing, counsel to Shuaib, Mr Teslim Adigun told the court that the

plaintiff had filed a 43 paragraph affidavit, in addition to 14 exhibits and a written address in support of his case.

Adigun, urged the court to grant his client's reliefs by declaring the withdrawal illegal and ordering his reinstatement into the course.

Responding, counsel to NIPSS, Mr P.A Akubo, SAN said the claims of the plaintiff were exaggerated and prayed the court to dismiss the suit.

Shuaib had dragged NIPSS to court to challenging his alleged unlawful withdrawal from the course after his admission had been approved and all required

payments and conditions fulfilled.

Shuaib, in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1329/2025, is seeking reinstatement into SEC 47 with full rights and privileges.

He also asked the defendants to pay him ₦1 billion in general and aggravated damages for alleged emotional and reputational harm.

He is also asking for ₦100 million as litigation costs.

The plaintiff is also praying the court for perpetual injunction restraining NIPSS from further harassment or intimidation.

After taking all the arguments, Justice Nyako fixed June 19 for judgment.

Earlier, the judge asked the plaintiff to return the key to the hostel accommodation he had in his possession.

The plaintiff had contended that he was holding unto the key on the grounds that the sum of ₦18.3 million he paid for the course covered accommodation for the entire duration, and the hostel suite was allocated on that basis.

He argued that his participation in the programme had not been lawfully terminated, noting that the legality of his suspension and withdrawal remained a central issue for determination by the court.

Farmer docked for allegedly destroying young palm trees

OKITIPUPA

The police on Thursday, dragged a 55-year-old farmer, Bayo Toluwase, before an Okitipupa Chief Magistrates' Court in Ondo State, over alleged malicious damage to young palm trees worth N500,000.

Toluwase, whose residential address was not stated, is facing trial on a two-count charge bordering on conspiracy and causing malicious damage.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, ASP Ayodeji Omoyeigha, told the court that the defendant and another person still at large, conspired to commit the offences on March 25, at about 7:00 a.m., at a farmland in Ayeka along Okitipupa-Irele Road.

According to the prosecu-

tor, the defendant and his accomplice, who reportedly had an unresolved dispute with one Peter Igbekele, unlawfully entered a parcel of land in the complainant's possession.

He was alleged to have cut down young palm trees belonging to Igbekele.

The prosecutor said that the defendant was consequently arrested by the police.

The offences contravene the provisions of sections 451 and 516 of the Criminal Laws of Ondo State, 2006.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Mayowa Olanipekun, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N100,000 with one surety in like sum.

The court also directed that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction and provide evidence of two years' tax payment to the state government.

Driver, 43, docked over alleged reckless driving, causing death of minor

IBADAN

A 43-year-old driver, Nura Usman, on Thursday, stood before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' court Ibadan, in answer to charges bordering on alleged dangerous driving and causing the death of a minor.

The defendant was charged on two-counts of dangerous driving and causing death.

During arraignment, an interpreter was provided to translate the charge to the defendant in Hausa language.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, ASP Sikiru Opaleye, alleged that the defendant committed the offence on January 31, at Ojoo.

He alleged that the defendant recklessly drove a Howo articulated vehicle with Registra-

tion No: ABC 441 XH, along the Ibadan-Lagos Expressway, Ojoo, Ibadan.

Opaleye alleged that the defendant had no regards for other road users, by driving in excessive speed, leading to the death of an eight-year-old child.

Opaleye said the offence contravenes the provisions of section 5 of the Federal Highway Act, Cap 135, Law of the Federation, 2000 as well as the

provisions of section 18, of the Road Traffic Act, Cap 148, Law of Oyo State 2000 .

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N10 million with one surety in like sum

The court held that the surety must be chairman of trailer drivers in Ojoo, Ibadan.

She adjourned the case until August 11, for hearing.

CORRIGENDUM

In our Tuesday April 28, 2026 edition, a report on the confirmation proceed-

ings at the Edo State House of Assembly incorrectly spelt the name of the Executive Di-

rector, Income Tax, Edo State Internal Revenue Service as Ehimare Victor.

The correct name is Ene-mare Victor.

The error is regretted.

NDDC soon to complete 1.2km Kaa-Ataba bridge project

PORT HARCOURT

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) says work on the 1.2km Kaa-Ataba Bridge project in Rivers, will soon be completed.

The Director, Corporate Affairs, Mrs Seledi Thompson-Wakama, disclosed this

in a statement on Thursday in Port Harcourt.

When completed, the bridge will link coastal communities to the mainland, improve connectivity, and boost economic growth.

Thompson-Wakama, said that the project which linked Khana and Andoni Local Government Areas, would open up previously

hard-to-reach communities.

She said that the project was strategic to the economic development of Rivers and the Niger Delta region at large.

According to the statement, the contractor, Jillian Group of Companies, is committed to its speedy and quality delivery

The firm's Managing Director,

Mr Christian Emeozor, who recently inspected the project, assured that it would be delivered according to schedule.

Emeozor said that irregular tidal waves hugely affected the movement of construction materials to the site.

"Adverse weather conditions also posed some challenges, par-

ticularly in transporting materials.

"We have to work within limited time windows. These challenges slowed down the process of installing the remaining beams," he said.

He said that measures had been put in place to mitigate the impact of the challenges.

"We are deploying more manpower and equipment to accelerate work and make up for lost time.

"Our goal is to deliver the pro-

ject on schedule without compromising quality," he added.

The managing director commended the host communities for their cooperation and peaceful conduct, noting that their support has contributed significantly to the progress recorded so far.

Recall that NDDC's Managing Director, Dr Samuel Ogbuku, recently briefed President Bola Tinubu on the progress of the bridge and other legacy projects of the commission.



AMUPITAN AND OTHERS' VISIT TO IGP:

Inspector General of Police, Tunji Disu (R), in a handshake with Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Joash Amupitan, during Amupitan and other top officials of INEC's visit to the IGP in his office in Abuja.

NAN PHOTO

UNICEF, Adamawa govt inaugurate emergency nutrition support fund for children

YOLA

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the Adamawa State Government, has inaugurated an emergency nutrition support programme for children aged zero to two years in the state.

Speaking at the inauguration on Thursday, Dr Nuzhat Rafique, Chief of UNICEF Bauchi Field Office, said the initiative was aimed at strengthening nutrition service delivery within the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

She said the programme was being implemented with fund-

ing support from the Government of Canada for children and mothers in Adamawa and Bauchi states.

"The first 1,000 days of a child's life, from conception when the mother becomes pregnant to the child's second birthday, are the most important days in the lives of both the child and the mother.

"The mother has to go through the process of giving birth to a healthy child and caring for the child up to two years," she said.

Rafique emphasised that both mothers and children required adequate care to improve their chances of survival

and healthy development.

Also speaking, Philomena Irene, Nutrition Specialist at UNICEF Bauchi Field Office, expressed concern over the under-five mortality rate in the state, which she said stood at 63 deaths per 1,000 live births.

According to her, the state and local government areas had demonstrated commitment to scaling up high-impact nutrition services across the first 1,000 days of life.

She said the capacity of government personnel would be strengthened through training, mentorship, and technical support to develop evidence-based strategies and implementation

plans.

Dr Zira Bubanani, Permanent Secretary, Adamawa State Ministry of Health, reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving healthcare service delivery in the state.

He appreciated UNICEF's support and collaboration in enhancing the well-being of children and assured that the state government would continue to provide an enabling environment for the successful implementation of the programme.

In his remarks, Dr Suleiman Bashir, Chairman of the Adamawa Primary Healthcare Development Agency (PHCDA), warned stakeholders and government officials against diversion of nutrition commodities.

NAADI targets Abia agribusiness development, export market expansion

NVOSI (ABIA)

The Nigeria Agribusiness and Agro-Industrial Development Initiative (NAADI) has said it is set to deepen agribusiness development in Abia through value addition, market expansion and capacity building for farmers and agro-processors.

The Leader of the NAADI delegation, Mr Charles Felix, disclosed this, on Wednesday, when the team visited Gov. Alex Otti in Nvosi, Isialangwa South LGA of the state.

Felix said that the initiative, backed by the Federal Government and anchored by the Fed-

eral Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, was designed to promote commercialised and profitable agricultural value chains across the country.

He said that the initiative aligned with the Nigerian Industrial Revolution Plan and focused on accelerating economic diversification, employment generation, food security and wealth creation.

According to him, NAADI targets key agro-commodities, such as palm produce, cassava, cocoa and coffee, while promoting wider participation in local and international agribusiness markets.

He said that the initiative would train stakeholders on best practices in planting, harvesting, storage, packaging and labelling to improve product quality and competitiveness.

Felix also said that the programme further aimed at addressing export rejection of agricultural products as well as challenges linked to poor packaging and labelling standards.

"As you know, for some time now, we have been battling with export rejects – export rejects in Sesame Seeds, Cocoa, Shea butter, export rejects in this and that.

"NAADI has come to address some of these issues.

"We have the product, you go down to Aba, they will do very fine, beautiful shoes, but they say the package has issues, the label has issues.

"These are the things that NAADI has come to help us to see if we can address and once we are able to address them, definitely, we have helped Your Excellency to achieve some of these vital points," Felix said.

He further said that the initiative would bridge funding gaps affecting small holder farmers, agro-processors and exporters, while encouraging public and private sector investment in agribusiness.

Rep El-Rufai, 4 others defect to new parties

ABUJA

The son of a former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, Bello El-Rufai, has defected from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to African Democratic Congress (ADC).

El-Rufai's defection was announced by the Speaker, Abbas Tajudeen, during plenary on Thursday.

Tajudeen said that El-Rufai was joining ADC, alongside two Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) lawmakers from Kadu-

na State — Reps. Umar Ajilo and Suleiman Richifa.

The speaker also announced the defection of Kamilu Ado, a lawmaker from Kano State, from ADC to Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC).

He equally announced the resignation of Rep. Joshua Obika, representing AMAC/Bwari Federal Constituency of the Federal Capital Territory, from APC to NDC.

All the affected members cited internal crises and uncertainty within their former parties as reasons for their defections.

Navy confiscates 1,800 litres of illegal diesel in Lagos raid

LAGOS

The Nigerian Navy has confiscated about 1,800 litres of suspected illegally acquired Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) in an intelligence-led operation in the Ibeju-Lekki area of Lagos.

This is contained in a statement by the Director of Naval Information, Navy Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, on Thursday.

Folorunsho said the operation was carried out by personnel of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Lekki following credible intelligence on the activities of suspected oil thieves and illegal petroleum product dealers in the area.

He said the patrol team mobilised to a location at Mobido Axis, Ibeju-Lekki, around 10:30 p.m. on May 6, believed to be a storage site for illegally acquired petroleum products.

"On sighting naval personnel, the suspects fled the scene,

abandoning the products.

"A search of the area led to the discovery of 10 containers of 30 litres each and five drums filled with substances suspected to be AGO, estimated at about 1,800 litres," he said.

Folorunsho said the confiscated products were evacuated to the FOB Lekki for further necessary action in line with operational procedures.

He said the operation, concluded in the early hours of May 7, underscored the Navy's sustained crackdown on illegal petroleum-related activities.

Folorunsho reiterated the Navy's commitment to denying economic saboteurs freedom of action within Nigeria's maritime and littoral environment.

He added that ongoing intelligence-driven operations would continue to target criminal networks involved in oil theft and illegal trade in petroleum products.

Police foil truck hijack, recover rifle in Ogun

ABEOKUTA

The Police Command in Ogun says it has foiled a truck hijacking incident and recovered a stolen DAF truck as well as a wooden-fabricated rifle in Ijebu-Imushin area of the state.

The command disclosed this in a statement on Thursday in Abeokuta by the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi.

According to the PPRO, the incident was reported in the early hours of Wednesday, following a distress call from a driver conveying motor spare parts.

He noted that preliminary investigations revealed that the driver was intercepted by suspected hoodlums at Oke-Ado area of Ijebu North Local Government Area of the state, where the truck was forcefully taken from him.

NEWS

Lagos Govt, Council bosses commit to COMPACT for improved health financing

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government and the 57 local government and local council development areas have signed the Lagos Primary Health Care Compact 2026–2036.

The COMPACT is a 10-year financing and governance framework aimed at revitalising primary health care across the state.

The COMPACT, endorsed at the Lagos State Primary Health Care Financing Retreat in Lakowe, formalised joint stewardship between the state and local governments for sustainable health system funding and delivery.

The agreement was signed

on behalf of the state by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr Kemi Ogunyemi, State Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi and Dr Ibrahim Mustafa, Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Primary Health Care Board.

The agreement acknowledged that primary health care had been chronically under-resourced since 1999 and requires coordinated investment.

Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi, said the new primary healthcare compact would unify the three tiers of government behind a single agenda to strengthen health service delivery.

He also said that primary healthcare must remain the bedrock of the system.

“The primary health care platform is the basis of healthcare delivery in any community.

“It’s like building a house. If the foundation is weak, the house will not stand the test of time”, he said.

He explained that care should start at the primary level before referral to secondary and tertiary facilities “as the complexity of your condition demands”.

Abayomi stressed that all tiers of government must now pull resources together instead of working in silos.

“There’s no point one tier of government doing one thing, another tier of government doing another thing.

“If we can pull our resources, come together to define a common agenda and a common strategy, and then everybody puts their resources behind the common agenda, we’re going to move forward very, very quickly,” he said.

He described the new compact as “a recipe for absolute success”, noting:

“We are united, we are committed, we are determined.”

Abayomi said a unified com-

mittee involving the Ministry of Health, the Primary Health Care Board, relevant agencies and local governments would “convert these statements in the compact into real, measurable activities with KPIs” before the end of the year.

Remarking, Mustafa said the compact’s core aims were expanding supply-side investment in primary health infrastructure and equipment.

Industry, academia seek collaboration to bridge graduate skills gap

LAGOS

Stakeholders across various sectors have called for stronger collaboration among industry, academia and government to address the widening skills gap among graduates, especially in technical and engineering fields.

The call was made during a virtual pre-conference workshop on industry-academia synergy organised by Maranatha University in collaboration with MSME Business Solutions.

Speaking at the session, the Managing Director of Topek Engineering and Consultancy Services Ltd., Mr Ayodeji Kunmi, said the education system places too much emphasis on theory at the expense of practical workplace skills.

Kunmi said many graduates focus on office-based jobs while opportunities in technical and field operations remain

largely untapped.

“Most graduates focus on theoretical knowledge and office jobs, whereas the real demand in sectors like engineering is for technicians and field engineers,” he said.

Kunmi noted that in many advanced economies, skilled professionals without university degrees excel through technical competence and practical experience.

“We work with partners abroad where some field engineers, with only diplomas, have over 30 years of experience and perform excellently. That practical exposure is what we are lacking,” he said.

Kunmi attributed the challenge to declining attention to technical education and societal preference for university degrees over vocational qualifications.

“Technical institutions meant to produce skilled manpower are no longer as functional, and this has created a gap between academic training and industry needs,” he said.

RMAFC validates data for sharing revenue with states, LGAs

BIRNIN KEBBI

The Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) has said that its ongoing nationwide data verification exercise is aimed at ensuring accurate data for sharing revenue for states and local government areas.

Prof. Adekunle Wright, and RMAFC commissioner who led the delegation to Kebbi, stated this at the commencement of the exercise in Birnin Kebbi.

Wright described the exercise as a critical national assignment that would strengthen the integrity of the indices used to distribute revenue across the federation.

He said it aligns with the commission’s constitutional mandate under Paragraph

32(b) of Part I of the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution, which empowers it to continuously review the revenue allocation formula.

According to him, changing socio-economic realities – including population shifts, infrastructure expansion and evolving development needs – make it essential to periodically verify and update the data underpinning revenue allocation.

“It has become necessary to validate the integrity and accuracy of the data that inform revenue distribution across the federation,” he said.

Wright commended the state government for its warm reception and lauded the coordination efforts of commission officials, particularly Kebbi’s Commissioner for Finance, Hajiya Rakiya Tanko-Ayuba.



COMPACT DOCUMENT SIGNED:

L-R: Dr Ibrahim Mustafa, Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Primary Health Care Board; Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi; Mr Sesan Olowa, Chairman of Conference 57 Local Government Chairmen in Lagos State and the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr Kemi Ogunyemi, sign COMPACT document in Lagos on Wednesday, May 6.

Benue faces worsening child malnutrition crisis —Official

AWKA

No fewer than 342,919 children under two in Benue State are stunted, representing 25 per cent of the 1,371,676 children within the age bracket.

The Benue State Nutrition Officer, Dr Faustina Shar, also revealed that 699,554 children, representing 51 per cent, were anaemic in the state.

Shar disclosed the figures in Akwa during a two-day Joint Inception and Planning Meeting on preventing malnutrition within the first 1,000 days of life.

The meeting was organised by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) along-

side the Enugu and Benue State Governments, with United States funding.

Shar described the growing malnutrition burden as a major public health concern requiring urgent and coordinated intervention across multiple sectors.

“Nutrition remained a critical component of development,” she said during the stakeholders’ engagement meeting.

She explained that proper nutrition improved infant, child, adolescent and maternal health, while strengthening immunity and ensuring safer pregnancy and childbirth outcomes.

According to her, good nutrition also reduces the risk of non-communicable diseases

and enhances long-term human development and productivity.

Shar warned that malnutrition continued limiting the potential of millions globally, with effects extending across generations and undermining economic growth and human capital development.

She identified poverty, poor access to nutritious foods, weak sanitation and hygiene, ignorance and harmful breastfeeding beliefs as major causes of malnutrition.

The nutrition officer also listed insecurity, poor food production methods, large family sizes and weak healthcare and road access among contributing factors.

She noted that malnutrition remained a serious threat to Ni-

geria’s development, especially among children under five years.

According to Shar, malnutrition contributes to poor cognitive development, weak immunity and low educational attainment among affected children.

On maternal health indicators, Shar said only 49.1 per cent of pregnant women attended at least four antenatal care visits in Benue.

She added that 33.2 per cent of pregnant women did not attend antenatal care throughout pregnancy.

Shar further disclosed that 63.9 per cent of women received iron, folic acid or multiple micronutrient supplements during pregnancy.

Guinness Nigeria ranks third-largest Guinness market globally

LAGOS

Guinness Nigeria Plc says the country has emerged as the third-largest market for the Guinness brand globally, behind Ireland and the United Kingdom.

The Finance and Strategy Director of the company, Mr Mayank Kabra, disclosed this during a media parley in Lagos.

Kabra said the Guinness brand had become deeply rooted in Nigeria after 76 years of operations, with many consumers now identifying it as a local brand.

“The most interesting thing for us is that Nigeria is the third-big-

gest market for Guinness globally after Ireland and the UK.

“Guinness has been part of this country for 76 years, and today many consumers see it as a Nigerian brand rather than an Irish one,” he said.

He attributed the company’s growth to strong consumer connection and evolving strategies aimed at sustaining relevance in a competitive market.

“We have remained consistent in understanding our consumers and evolving with them. That connection is what continues to drive our growth in Nigeria,” Kabra added.

According to him, Guinness

Nigeria continues to leverage football partnerships, including the Premier League and Arsenal FC, to deepen consumer engagement through its “Match Day” activations.

“Football remains a powerful cultural platform for us. Through our partnerships, we are able to connect with consumers in a way that goes beyond just the product,” he said.

Kabra added that the company’s operations are anchored on consumer obsession, operational excellence, winning culture and financial performance.

“We are focused on building a strong portfolio, investing in

our people, and driving digital transformation that supports sustainable growth,” he said.

Also speaking, Mr Rotimi Odusola, Corporate Relations and Legal Director, Guinness Nigeria, said the company remained committed to strong corporate governance and ethical business practices.

“Governance is very important to us. We operate with transparency, accountability and strict adherence to ethical standards,” he said.

Odusola noted that the company was among the first firms certified under the Corporate Governance Rating Scheme of the Nigerian Exchange Ltd. (NGX).

Kogi govt confirms rescue of abducted orphanage victims

LOKOJA

Kogi State government has confirmed the safe rescue of all victims abducted from the Daarul-Kitab Islamic Orphanage in Lokoja.

The confirmation came in a statement issued in Lokoja by the Commissioner for Information and Communications, Mr Kingsley Fanwo.

Gunmen attacked the orphanage on April 26 and abducted 23 pupils, including the proprietor's wife.

The government had earlier

confirmed the rescue of 15 victims on April 27 following intensified security operations across the state.

Fanwo said the remaining nine victims regained freedom during a rescue operation conducted in the early hours of Wednesday.

He described the development as a major breakthrough against criminal elements operating within the state and a relief to affected families.

According to him, troops of the 12 Brigade of the Nigerian Army led the coordinated search-

and-rescue mission with support from other security agencies.

"The operation, carried out in the Agbaja Forest axis of Lokoja Local Government Area, resulted in the safe recovery of five boys, two girls, and two adult females.

"The rescued victims have been evacuated to a military medical facility, where they are receiving proper medical care and attention," Fanwo said.

The state Governor, Ahmed Ododo, praised officers and personnel of the Nigerian Army and collaborating secu-

rity agencies for their professionalism and bravery.

The governor also commended the victims and their families for their resilience throughout the traumatic experience.

"The safety and security of all residents remain the foremost priority of our administration.

"This successful operation underscores our determination to ensure that criminal elements have no foothold in Kogi.

"We will continue to strengthen our security architecture, deepen intelligence gathering, and support secu-

rity agencies to act swiftly and decisively," Ododo said.

The governor also appreciated President Bola Tinubu for supporting efforts to sustain security and stability in Kogi.

He commended heads of security agencies nationwide for their continued cooperation and coordinated response against violent crimes.

He reiterated the state gov-

ernment's zero-tolerance stance on kidnapping and other violent criminal activities across Kogi.

Ododo urged residents to remain vigilant and support security agencies with timely and credible information capable of preventing future attacks.

He assured the public that efforts were ongoing to arrest the perpetrators and ensure they faced justice.



THE RESCUED VICTIMS:

Rescued victims abducted from Daarul-Kitab Islamic Orphanage in Lokoja.

NASU, SSANU to suspend strike on Monday —Committee

ABUJA

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) of non-teaching university staff has said that its ongoing nationwide strike will be suspended on Monday.

The JAC comprises the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU).

JAC decision was contained in a circular jointly issued in Abuja by Mr Peters Adeyemi, NASU General Secretary, and Mr Mohammed Ibrahim,

SSANU National President respectively.

The circular was addressed to all branch chairmen of NASU and SSANU in universities and inter-university centres across the country.

The committee recalled that the unions had engaged in a series of meetings with government officials since the strike commenced on May 1, 2026.

It added that discussions focused on demands of members and conclusion of the renegotiation of the 2009 agreement.

It said another crucial meeting was held on Tuesday with the FGN Expanded Renegoti-

ation Committee, chaired by Alhaji Yayale Ahmed.

"The government committee acknowledged further review of government's earlier offers which requires approval from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu."

The committee said it considered the appeal by government for the suspension of the ongoing strike action to allow negotiations continue.

"The committee acknowledged government's commitment that renegotiations, including review of CONTTA, would be concluded within two weeks.

"Branch leaders are hereby urged to note this appeal and convene congresses to report the above, for the suspension of the strike, effective from Monday May 11, 2026, while other engagement with relevant stakeholders continue," it said.

JAC also acknowledged receipt of appeal letters from the Expanded Tertiary Institutions Renegotiation Committee and withdrawal of the 30 per cent CONTTA increase.

The committee expressed appreciation to all members for total compliance during the industrial action and urged them to remain united.

FRSC sensitises Anambra road users, conducts free drunk-driving tests

AWKA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Anambra has begun a sensitization exercise for motorists and pedestrians on safe road usage.

The corps also used the occasion to conduct free drunk-driving tests at motor parks in Awka.

The exercise which held around Regina Caeli Junction in Awka, was aimed at promoting safe highway use and reduction of road traffic crashes.

The Sector Commander, Mrs Bridget Asekhauno, said the campaign formed part of

the corps' Corporate Social Responsibility to reduce road traffic crashes by 10 per cent.

"Our mission is to fulfil part of our strategic goal of reducing road traffic accidents by 10 per cent.

"We are also here to ensure that road users operate safely, especially as pedestrians often struggle to cross the road at this junction," she said.

Asekhauno explained that the corps intervened to manage traffic and assist pedestrians in crossing safely to prevent accidents.

She attributed motorists' failure to observe zebra cross-

ings largely to ignorance.

"A lot of people do not understand the importance of zebra crossings. We are educating drivers to stop and give pedestrians the right of way.

"However, even when drivers slow down, some pedestrians cross the road sluggishly," she said.

The sector commander said construction of a pedestrian bridge would provide long-term solution to the challenge, adding that, the corps had already drawn the attention of the state government to the issue.

"We have sent a memo to the governor and we are hopeful

that necessary action would be taken," she said.

Asekhauno said the drunk-driving tests were conducted periodically at selected parks to ensure drivers were fit to drive.

"Every month, we carry out these tests in selected parks to ensure drivers are physically, psychologically and emotionally fit before going on the road.

"This is done both in the morning and evening. Drinking and driving do not mix," she said.

A Pedestrian, Mrs Jubilete Ikeonwu, commended the FRSC for assisting residents to cross the busy highway.

2027 polls: NYSC DG urges corps members to remain apolitical

GUSAU

The Director-General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Brig-Gen. Olakunle Nafiu, has warned corps members to stay away from partisan politics as the 2027 general elections approach.

Nafiu gave the warning while addressing the 2026 Batch A, Stream II corps members at the temporary NYSC orientation camp in Gusau.

"The 2027 general elections are around the corner, and you will be engaged by INEC as ad hoc staff. You must be good ambassadors of the NYSC and Nigeria whenever you serve as electoral officers.

"Avoid using social media for political issues. Your duty as corps members is to promote national unity and cohesion," he said.

The NYSC DG urged corps members to remain law-abiding and contribute to national development.

He also advised them to apply the lessons learned during the three-week orientation course during and after their service year, noting that key lessons include peaceful coexistence, national unity and development.

Nafiu assured corps members of the Federal Government's commitment to prioritising their welfare and security.

He charged them to take the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme seriously, noting that it was designed to equip corps members with practical empowerment skills.

"You should make the best use of the opportunities in SAED," he added.

Nafiu also stressed the importance of savings and financial management for future economic empowerment.

"Learn to develop multiple income sources and avoid unnecessary spending.

"You should learn to establish businesses so that you won't rely solely on government jobs after service," he said.

He further urged corps members to respect the culture of their host communities.

"Be kind to the people of Zamfara and respect their traditions," he advised.

Earlier in a welcome address, NYSC Coordinator in Zamfara, Malam Muhammad Lawan said over 500 corps members registered for the 2026 Batch A, Stream II orientation course.

Energy reforms attracting new investments into Nigeria —NCDMB

JOS

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) says ongoing reforms in the oil and gas sector are attracting billions of dollars in new investments and restoring investor confidence.

Executive Secretary of NCDMB, Mr Felix Ogbe, said this at the 2026 Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) Investment Forum held on the sidelines of the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) in Houston, Texas, U.S.

The forum has as its theme: "Nigeria as an OEM Investment Destination: Addressing Barriers, Enabling Entry and Strengthening Local Content Partnerships".

Ogbe, represented by the Director, Planning Research and Statistics, NCDMB, Mr Silas Ajimijaye, said Nigeria had moved beyond its traditional image as a high-potential market to become a destination delivering

measurable investment returns.

"Nigeria is no longer a promise waiting to be fulfilled; it is an investment destination delivering results at speed and scale," he said.

Ogbe attributed the momentum to reforms introduced through executive orders signed by President Bola Tinubu in February 2024.

According to him, the reforms have significantly reduced regulatory bottlenecks, accelerated approvals and improved the ease of doing business in the sector.

"Under the new regime, Nigerian content plan approvals now carry a strict 10-day deadline, with automatic consent granted if regulators fail to respond.

"Contracting cycles that once stretched up to 18 months have been compressed to as little as four to six months, while targeted tax incentives have been introduced to stimulate deepwater and gas investments," he said.

NEWS

APC unmoved by Obi's defection, says Yilwatda

ABUJA

Prof. Nantewe Yilwatda, National Chairman of the All progressives Congress, APC, has said that the party is unconcerned about Mr Peter Obi's defection from ADC to the Nigeria Democratic Congress, NDC.

Yilwatda spoke in Abuja during the ongoing purchase and

submission of APC nomination and expression of interest forms for the 2027 elections.

Obi was the Labour Party presidential candidate during the 2023 presidential election.

Yilwatda said opposition parties should resolve their internal disputes, insisting their crises had nothing to do with the APC.

He described the resignation of about 18 National Assembly

members from African Democratic Congress, ADC to NDC as insignificant and incapable of threatening the ruling party.

"If someone defects from ADC to NDC or another opposition party, that does not affect APC.

"Let them sort out their problems. APC remains solid and we are moving forward with strong numbers.

"You talked about NDC. When people join APC, they claim we paid them, but when

they defect among themselves, nobody says anything.

"None of those defecting is from our party. They are fishing from the same pond," the APC national chairman stated.

Speaking on the ongoing sale of nomination forms, Yilwatda said the large turnout reflected Nigerians' growing support for the APC.

"Nigerians are happy with what APC is doing. They love and accept the party across all geopolitical zones.

"We are encouraged by the large number of people coming out to purchase our forms," he added.

Yilwatda said the party was well organised and adequately prepared for the 2027 general elections.

"This can only happen in APC, and we are pleased to witness it under our administration," he said.

The APC chairman ruled out extending the deadline for purchase and submission of

forms, citing constraints imposed by the Electoral Act.

"We would have loved to extend the time, but we are time-bound.

"The Electoral Act limits the timeframe for conducting primaries and submitting results. We also want to avoid unnecessary complications," Yilwatda said.

He added that measures would be introduced during aspirants' screening to reduce overcrowding and ensure a smooth exercise.

Accord Party backs Otti's re-election bid in Abia

NVOSI (ABIA)

The National leadership of the Accord Party has declared its support for the re-election bid of Governor Alex Otti of Abia in 2027, citing his developmental strides in the state.

The National Chairman of the party, Prof. Christopher Imumolen, made this known during a chat with newsmen shortly after his visit to Otti, in Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area.

Imumolen said that the party was impressed by the governor's performance in infrastructure, education, healthcare and other sectors.

He said that the party decided to support Otti beyond political affiliations because governance should be centred on development and the welfare of the people.

"So we are here today to appreciate the governor, to thank him for what he is doing, and to also stand with him.

"We know election is drawing closer, and we are saying that if he has done this much,

we believe that as a party, we should stand with him, we should fight with him, and ensure that there is continuity, even after 2027.

"We are supporting the governor, and that is simple; we are giving support to him in Accord Party," he said.

Imumolen added that the best way to appreciate Otti's leadership was to support his return for a second term.

He further pledged that his party would work closely with Otti, and would align with his leadership and direction in Abia.

"We are in a country where politicians will say something today, and tomorrow they will say another.

"So we have said that we will support and work with the governor and that is our word, and we are standing with the governor, 100 per cent," Imumolen said.

The national and state leadership of the Accord Party paid the governor a visit in Nvosi.

In his remark, the National Secretary of the Accord Party, Malam Mukhtar Abdallah, said that the party's national leadership had directed its Abia chapter to work with the Labour Party for the progress of the state.

Ekiti 2026: Oyebanji's cabinet donates N100m to support reelection

ADO-EKITI

Members of the Ekiti Executive Council has donated N100 million to support the reelection of Gov. Biodun Oyebanji ahead of the June 20 governorship election.

This was made known in a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Mr Yinka Oyeboode in Ado-Ekiti.

Oyeboode said the donation was announced during a brief meeting held at the State Executive Council Chamber, Governor's Office, Ado-Ekiti.

He said that the executive members described the donation as "a token" of their love, loyalty and commitment to the governor's second term bid.

Presenting the donation on behalf of other members, the Secretary to the State Government, Prof. Habibat Adubiario, and the Special Adviser on Political Matters, Chief Jide Awe, said they were proud to serve in the administration.

They noted that the gesture reflected their collective appre-

ciation of the governor's leadership style and developmental strides in the state.

According to them, the council members remain resolute in their commitment to ensuring Oyebanji's victory at the poll.

They expressed optimism that he would secure a second term in office.

Responding, Oyebanji expressed gratitude to the executive council for what he described as a remarkable show of solidarity and support.

The governor said the donation was unprecedented, noting that no previous executive council in the state had made such a significant contribution toward a sitting governor's reelection campaign.

He added that the gesture would further motivate him to continue delivering good governance and justify the confidence reposed in him by his team.

Also speaking, the Chief of Staff to the Governor and Secretary to the Campaign Council, Mr Niyi Adebayo, confirmed receipt of the donation into the campaign account.



SWEARING-IN:

Deputy Governor, Kano State, Murtala Garo (R), taking oath of office before the Chief Judge of Kano State, Justice Dije Aboki (L); Gov. Abba Kabir-Yusuf of Kano State (2nd,L) and others, during the swearing-in of the deputy governor at the Governor's Office in Kano State.

World Press Freedom Day: Don tasks journalists on peace, accountability

ASABA

Dr Gideon Isika, an Associate Professor of Mass Communication, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta, has urged journalists to promote peace as Nigeria grapples with sundry challenges.

Isika gave the charge while delivering a lecture to commemorate "World Press Freedom Day" with the theme, "Journalists as a Tool for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building."

The event was organised by the Delta Online Publishers Forum (DOPF) in Asaba.

He said that media had a critical role to play in conflict resolution, more so now that the country continued to grapple with mounting socio-economic and political challenges.

According to him, media professionals have to take a more proactive role in fostering peace, accountability, and national cohesion.

Isika expressed concern that the media in Nigeria has not sufficiently risen to the responsibility of shaping national discourse toward unity and stability.

He noted that, this was so, in spite of the widespread acknowledgment that the country was facing significant structural and governance challenges.

He said that deliberate efforts by journalists to "ignite constructive national rebirth" remained limited.

According to him, many Nigerians continue to attribute the country's present condition to

historical factors, such as the 1914 amalgamation under British colonial administration.

"The media must move beyond blame narratives and focus on actionable solutions that promote cohesion and development," he stressed.

Isika drew comparisons with countries such as Botswana, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa, and Egypt—nations he said had made remarkable progress despite difficult starting points.

He decried the fact that Nigeria, in contrast, had struggled to translate its vast human and natural resources into meaningful development across successive administrations.

He quoted a media scholar, Aghalino, as saying that journalists in Nigeria had often failed to exert adequate pressure on governments to uphold transparency and accountability.

He claimed that a segment of the media had been co-opted into serving as tools for propaganda by political and military elites.

Isika further linked poor governance, including widespread corruption and mismanagement of public funds, to rising insecurity and violence in the country.

He said, "There is a direct connection between official wrongdoing and societal instability."

He warned that when state institutions become instruments for exploitation, public safety would be undermined.

Isika also raised concerns about compromised editorial independence.

He alleged that some media executives and editors were influenced by government patronage, thereby weakening the credibility and effectiveness of journalism in Nigeria.

2027 election: INEC resumes CVR registration in Oyo

IBADAN

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will resume the third phase of the Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) across the 33 local government areas of Oyo State on May 11.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Oyo, Prof. Adeniran Tella, made this known in a statement issued in

Ibadan.

According to Tella, the third phase of the CVR, which will end on July 10, is for the online pre-registration and physical registration across the state.

He said that the exercise was in line with the 2026 approved timetable, and would also accommodate the rotational movement of INEC Voter Enrollment Device (IVED) machines across all the 33 registra-

tion areas of INEC LGAs' offices.

The REC said the timing for the exercise, including the rotational movement of IVED machines would be between 9 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. daily, excluding weekends and public holidays.

He also stated that prospective registrants could visit the commission's state office and any of its offices across the 33 local government areas within the stipulated time frame for

the exercise.

Tella also urged all eligible citizens to take full advantage of the last phase of the CVR to register.

He added that those who wanted to change their polling units or voting state should take the opportunity at hand.

The REC urged registrants who had not yet collected their Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) to do the same.

Agriculture

Cassava economy: How Edo families are building daily survival around a humble crop

JOSHUA EDO

In many homes across Benin City and rural communities in Edo State, survival does not begin in an office or a factory. It begins on small farms, in smoky local kitchens and inside crowded markets where women rise before dawn to prepare cassava meals for customers struggling with the harsh realities of Nigeria's economy.

For thousands of families, cassava has become more than an ordinary crop. It is the quiet backbone of household survival. It pays school fees, settles hospital bills and keeps food on the table at a time when the prices of rice, bread and other staples continue to rise beyond the reach of many low-income earners.

Behind every basin of garri displayed in the market and every steaming wrap of fufu served to customers is a story of hard work, resilience and determination. From farmers cultivating cassava in remote villages to women processing and selling its products in urban markets, an entire chain of livelihoods now depends on the humble tuber.

In Edo State, cassava is not simply eaten; it is lived. And in communities where jobs are scarce and economic pressure continues to weigh heavily on households, the crop is helping many families hold on to dignity and hope.

Every morning at Ekiosa Market, 48-year-old Mama Blessing begins another long day beside steaming pots of boiling cassava. Before sunrise, she peels tubers bought from farmers in Ovia, ferments them and pounds them into soft balls of fufu for hungry customers who troop into the market from different parts of the city.

By the end of the day, she would have sold about 20 balls of fufu at ₦600 each, earning ₦12,000 in total sales. After removing the cost of cassava, firewood and water, her daily profit stands at roughly ₦2,000. It may appear modest, but for Mama Blessing, that money feeds a family of five and helps keep two children in school.

Across Edo State, thousands of families share similar stories. From farmers cultivating cassava in rural communities to women processing garri in crowded urban markets, cassava has quietly become one of the strongest pillars of household survival and small-scale commerce.

For many residents, cassava is more than a staple food. It is income security in difficult economic times.

At Uselu Market, another trader, popularly known as Aunty Grace, has built a steady business around garri sales. She purchases 100 kilograms of processed garri from a cooperative in Orhionmwon and repackages the product into one-kilogram nylon sachets for retail customers.

Each sachet sells for about ₦1,500, and in a good week she can move as much as 80 kilograms. Her weekly profit averages ₦15,000, but during school resumption periods and festive



Using 50 kilograms of dried cassava chips purchased for ₦25,000, she produces about 100 plates of food which she sells at ₦500 per plate. Her daily revenue can rise to ₦50,000, while profit after expenses averages ₦20,000. Working only three times weekly, she earns enough to support her household comfortably

seasons, demand rises sharply and her monthly earnings can climb to ₦150,000.

Unlike many food products that spoil quickly, garri can be stored for long periods, allowing traders to take advantage of price increases during periods of scarcity.

At New Benin Market, Aunty Ngozi has also found financial stability through cassava-based meals. She prepares abachar, a local delicacy made from dried shredded cassava mixed with palm oil, fish and vegetables.

Using 50 kilograms of dried cassava chips purchased for ₦25,000, she produces about 100 plates of food which she sells at ₦500 per plate. Her daily revenue can rise to ₦50,000, while profit after expenses averages ₦20,000. Working only three times weekly, she earns enough to support her household comfortably.

The popularity of abachar among students, civil servants and low-income earners reflects the growing importance of affordable local foods in a

period of rising food prices.

Economic experts and local traders alike say cassava remains one of the few crops that supports an entire value chain at community level. A single tonne of cassava can generate income for farmers, processors, transporters and retailers simultaneously.

This became particularly evident during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown when prices of imported foods such as rice and wheat products rose sharply. In many Edo homes, garri and fufu became the reliable alternatives that helped households survive the period of economic uncertainty because the crop was readily available and locally produced.

For smallholder farmers, cassava cultivation also presents a rare opportunity for stable income generation. Agricultural estimates show that one hectare of cassava farmland can yield up to 25 tonnes within nine months.

At the current farm gate price of about ₦80,000 per tonne, a farmer can generate nearly ₦2 million in revenue. After production expenses es-

timated at ₦600,000, the farmer may retain around ₦1.4 million as profit over the planting cycle.

For rural households in communities such as Irrua, Akoko-Edo and Ovia, such earnings can make the difference between poverty and modest financial stability. School fees, medical bills and farming reinvestments are often funded directly from cassava proceeds.

Beyond the local markets, processing plants within Edo State are also helping to sustain the industry, though many operators say the sector still faces serious infrastructure challenges.

The cassava processing facility located in Iguobazuwa, Ovia South West, was designed to process about 10 tonnes of cassava daily into garri and fufu flour. However, power supply problems have reportedly limited operations to a fraction of installed capacity.

Stakeholders believe that with improved investment and stronger public-private partnerships, the plant could become a guaranteed market for hundreds of cassava farmers across surrounding communities.

Similarly, in Uromi, the Edo Starch and Ethanol Company has continued to source cassava directly from local outgrower farmers for starch production supplied to bakeries in Benin and Auchi. The arrangement offers farmers a more stable buyer and reduces dependence on unpredictable open market pricing.

Industry observers say the sector possesses enormous untapped potential, especially if small-scale vendors are supported with better packaging,

food safety training and cooperative financing.

Many women traders still sell garri and cassava products openly in basins exposed to dust and contamination. Agricultural extension workers believe simple packaging improvements and certification from agencies such as the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control could significantly raise the market value of these products.

Under cooperative arrangements, groups of women can jointly acquire manual graters, hydraulic presses and solar dryers, reducing production costs while increasing output and profits. Properly branded and packaged garri products could also gain entry into supermarkets, schools and institutional feeding programmes.

For many residents, the future of cassava in Edo State lies not only in farming but in value addition and organised processing.

In communities where unemployment continues to push young people toward migration in search of opportunities, cassava remains one of the few economic activities capable of generating income close to home.

From the woman selling fufu in Ekiosa Market to the farmer harvesting tubers in Ovia, cassava continues to serve as a quiet but powerful source of survival for thousands of Edo families.

In difficult economic times, the crop that once sustained previous generations is once again proving its relevance — not merely as food on the table, but as a pathway to dignity, livelihood and economic resilience.

Friday Sermon



The reward for sincere effort is with Allah

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of mankind, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. We seek His help, His guidance and His forgiveness. We testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, and we testify that Prophet Muhammad is His servant and messenger. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, his family, companions, and all those who follow his path until the Day of Judgment.

Dear brothers and sisters in Islam, fear Allah as He should be feared and know that this worldly life is temporary. People may appreciate you today and forget you tomorrow. They may praise your efforts today and criticize you the next day. Human recognition changes, but the reward from Allah never fails.

Many people become discouraged when their good efforts are ignored. Some work sincerely, support others, help their families, serve society, or struggle honestly in their workplaces, yet they receive little appreciation. Sometimes, those they assist may even repay them with ingratitude. This can make the heart heavy.

But as believers, we must remember that our deeds are not primarily for people; they are for Allah.

Allah the most High says in the Noble Qur'an: "Is the reward for good anything but good?"

This is a powerful promise from Allah. Every sincere effort, every sac-

rifice, every hidden act of kindness, every truthful word, and every moment of patience is known by Him.

A person may not thank you, but Allah sees you. People may fail to recognize your sincerity, but Allah records it.

Others may overlook your struggle, but Allah never overlooks even the weight of an atom of good.

The believer therefore works with sincerity, not for applause, not for fame, not for recognition, but seeking the pleasure of Allah alone.

Brothers and sisters, One of the greatest qualities in Islam is sincerity. A sincere person continues doing good even when nobody is watching. He remains honest even when cheating appears easier. She continues helping others even when appreciation does not come.

Today, many people only act when there is recognition. Some only help when cameras are present. Some only support others when there is something to gain. But the true servant of Allah does good quietly and sincerely.

Prophet Muhammad taught us that actions are judged by intentions. If your intention is pure, your reward with Allah is secure, even if people misunderstand you.

Sometimes, you may support people and they later turn against you. You may stand for truth and people may mock you. You may work sincerely among others who are lazy or dishonest. Do not allow their behaviour to change your character.

Do your best sincerely. Remain

truthful. Remain dependable. Remain kind. Remain just.

Do not reduce your goodness because others fail to appreciate it. A candle does not stop giving light because some people dislike brightness.

Dear Muslims, One of the tricks of Shaytan is to make people feel that goodness is useless. He whispers: "What is the benefit of helping people?" "What did you gain from being honest?" "Why continue doing good when nobody cares?" But the believer knows that Allah never wastes good deeds.

Allah says that He does not allow the reward of those who do good to be lost. Every prayer you perform sincerely, every lawful effort to feed your family, every assistance you render to the needy, every encouragement you give to someone in pain, every sacrifice you make for peace and unity, all are preserved with Allah.

Even a smile is rewarded. Even removing harm from the road is rewarded. Even speaking kindly is rewarded. Imagine then the reward for years of patience, sincerity and sacrifice.

Brothers and sisters, The stories of the prophets teach us this lesson clearly. Many prophets preached for years with few followers. Some were mocked and rejected by their own people. Yet they remained steadfast because they sought Allah's pleasure, not human approval.

Consider Prophet Nuh who preached for many years despite rejection. Consider Prophet Ibrahim who stood firmly for truth even when

opposed by his people. Consider Prophet Musa who endured hardship and opposition repeatedly. Their sincerity made them successful in the sight of Allah.

Success in Islam is not only measured by worldly applause. True success is when Allah is pleased with you. A person may be unknown on earth but honoured in the heavens. Another may be celebrated among people but empty before Allah. So ask yourself: Who am I trying to please? Whose reward am I seeking? Whose judgment matters most?

Dear faithful, We must also learn to appreciate good people around us. Islam teaches gratitude. The one who does not thank people does not truly thank Allah. Encourage those who are sincere. Pray for those who help others. Speak good words to people who strive honestly.

Sometimes, a kind word can strengthen a tired heart. Sometimes, appreciation can encourage someone to continue doing good. Do not mock sincere people. Do not discourage honest workers. Do not frustrate those trying to make positive change. Instead, support goodness and discourage evil.

At the same time, if appreciation does not come, never allow bitterness to enter your heart. Continue your good deeds for Allah.

If people praise you, thank Allah. If people ignore you, still thank Allah. If people criticize you unjustly, remain patient. The believer's heart remains attached to Allah, not to human val-

idation.

Brothers and sisters in Islam, life is short. Wealth will perish. Positions will end. Fame will fade. But good deeds done sincerely for Allah remain forever.

On the Day of Judgment, many hidden deeds will appear before Allah. A small act done sincerely may outweigh great deeds done for show.

Therefore: Do your work sincerely. Fulfill your responsibilities sincerely. Help your family sincerely. Serve humanity sincerely. Worship Allah sincerely. And leave your reward to Allah.

Never become tired of doing good because of people's attitudes. Remember always: "The reward for good is nothing but good."

May Allah make us among the sincere servants whose deeds are accepted. May He purify our intentions and keep our hearts firm upon goodness. May He reward every sincere effort we make in secret and in public. May He protect us from hypocrisy, pride and seeking praise from people alone.

May Allah bless our homes, guide our leaders, strengthen our communities and grant ease to all those passing through hardship.

May Allah send His peace and blessings upon Prophet Muhammad, his family, companions and all righteous believers. Ameen.

Abdul-Kadir Abdullah is the President, Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), Edo State Chapter.



PORTABLE (L) WITH CARTER EFE, DURING THEIR BOUT

Celebrity boxing: I'm yet to receive my prize money —Carter Efe

● *as Portable claimed victory was scripted by organisers to evade N23bn betting payment*

The least may have not been heard about the celebrity boxing bout that took place in Lagos last Friday as the champion of the match and popular Nigerian screamer, Carter Efe had lamented delay in the payment of the N50 million prize money to him by the organisers of the event.

It is on record that Carter Efe defeated Habeeb Okikiola popularly known as Portable in a celebrity boxing fight last Friday 1st of May, 2026, to win the #50million prize money.

Reacting to his defeat, Portable alleged that Carter Efe victory in the celebrity boxing was scripted by the organisers to avoid paying the #23billion stakes by fans who placed bets on his winning.

Portable made the claim after being mocked by many celebrities on social media.

Following how Portable was beaten, many celebrities mocked the singer over his week-long verbal threats to defeat Carter.

Speaking amidst the ongoing mockery, the singer in an Instagram video stated that the organisers crowned Carter Efe to avoid making a #23billion betting payment to beneficiary.

"Na Zazu, anywhere I follow is where una go follow. I'm the king while you guys are the chiefs. Everybody go dey follow my way. You guys don't have different content, different music style."

"Aside from being a celebrity or a musician can you event something else? I make Nigeria boxing big by

originating celebrity fights. All of you mocking me can't kill me."

"To those mocking me, for your information, I have been paid N40 million before the match, we were fighting for remaining N10 million."

"My fans, I was paid N40 million before the fight and also paid N1 million each per post to promote the match five times, that is N5 million and N45 million in total"

"Carter Efe was throwing fowl blow on me, the referee was not fair to me. Carter Efe's victory was intensional, how many people bet on him compel to those who stake their hard earn resources on me," he asked

Portable had previously beaten Speed Darlington and Charles Okocha in 2025.

Govt interference significantly affecting quality, impact of modern Nigerian music industry —Seun Kuti

Grammy-nominated Afrobeat singer, Seun-kuti has said that government interference has significantly affected the quality and impact of modern Nigerian music.

Speaking in a recent episode of the Saleh mediate podcast, Kuti said his music was blacklisted in the Nigerian music industry for about 13 years due to his style of music.

He further explained that because some musicians like his father, Fela Anikulapo-kuti and his contemporaries used their music as a form of protest against bad governance, the government invested heavily in vain artistes while targeting conscious musicians.

"The impact of Fela and his contemporaries who spoke truth to power sacred the government. They made the government realised the power of artistry, because of this the government decided to invest more on artistes who don't make conscious music than artistes who sing about realities."

"When I am in Nigeria, I don't fear

to say whatever I want to say. That is why a lot of people are saying that I should be cancelled. I have been cancelled for 13 years now after I performed conscious music at former Lagos state governor, Ambode's

event, even before then, my music was highly restricted."

"Artistes who are scared of being blacklisted are only scared because Nigeria makes up their fansbase," he asserted.



KUTI

Ice Prince cuts off sex, alcohol

Nigerian singer and rapper, Ice Zamani has shared more details about his lifestyle overhaul, during his weight loss journey.

The 'Oleku' music crooner revealed that he is currently being celebrated and has also completely ditched smoking.

Relishing his transformation on social media, Ice Prince said he felt "unchained and saved."

The artiste posted on his X handle

that quitting sex and cigarette is by far the best decision he has ever made in life, adding that from chronic smoker to non smoker is not a mere achievement" God is the greatest, I am now feeling unchained and saved."

The rapper added that he has also ditched alcohol, soda, energy drinks and bread for over a year, even as he expressed his desire to continue his current lifestyle for the rest of his life.



ICE PRINCE

My beef with Wizkid is for life —Seun Kuti

Maverick singer, Seun Kuti has ruled out reconciliation with Afrobeats star boy, Wizkid declaring that their rift is lifelong.

It could be recalled that Seun Kuti and Wizkid fell apart after the latter claimed he was greater than Afrobeat pioneer legend Fela Anikulapo - kuti in response to the former's directive

to fans to stop comparing the ' Ojuelegba' crooner to the music legend.

When asked in a recent podcast if he has settled his beef with Wizkid, Seun said he can't reconcile with the star boy boss because he disrespected his late father.

"I don't have anything to say about him, you can't disrespect my dad and expect me to be your friend" he quired.



AKINDELE

Why I stopped attending church service —Funke Akindele

Famous Nollywood actress, Funke Akindele has revealed why she lost interest in attending church service.

The actress who made the revelation in a Snapchat video on Sunday, said that she stopped going to church because attention often shifted to her rather than the service.

While explaining that she is always the focus anytime she is in church, the screen goddess disclosed that she now joins church service online.

"Every time I have challenges, I have to start going to the Celestial church quietly at night for solutions. I have to stop hiding and publicly identify with the church" she said.

ArtsWorld with Francis Odupte 08023680030

A peep into Nigeria's culture and heritage

The Nigerian Government in September, 1988, launched the "National Cultural Policy". This policy document defined culture as "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbour". As a further step, the Federal Government in June 1999, created the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism by mid 2006, the ministry was renamed Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, with the mandate to promote the nation's rich cultural heritage, through the identification, development and marketing, of

the diverse cultural and tourism potentials. However In November 2015, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was later merged with the ministry of information, which is now known as the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism.

The culture of Nigeria is shaped by Nigeria's multiple ethnic groups. The country has over 50 languages and over 250 dialects and ethnic groups. The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani who are predominant in the north, the Igbo who are predominant in the south-east, and the Yoruba who are predominant in the southwest. The Edo people are predominant in the region between Yoruba land and Igbo land. Much of the Edo tends to be Christian while the remaining 25 percent worship dei-

ties called Ogu. This group is followed by the Ibibio/Annang/Efik people of coastal southeastern Nigeria and the Ijaw of the Niger Delta. The rest of Nigeria's ethnic groups (sometimes called 'minorities') are found all over the country but especially in the middle belt and north. The Hausa tend to be Muslim and the Igbo are predominantly Christian.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMMON TIES

It is popularly believed that Nigeria has about three hundred fifty linguistic groups Language is the vehicle for creating and mastering the complex realities that define any geographical expression. It is the most dynamic element of any culture or society. Languages are vital for transmitting

knowledge, world views and verbal arts over the years. These languages and the cultures they transmit are however not barriers but bridges of understanding and mutual cooperation across their respective frontiers which differentiates them as entities sometimes referred to as "ethnic nationalities". Some super structures are known to have grown which help to mediate the diversities and channel them into harmonies and unity. This is why today we talk about "Unity in Diversity". Examples of such include, dress modes, inter-ethnic marriages, shared religious beliefs and practices as well as commerce. People have equally developed interest in other cultures to the extent of speaking different languages and taking names from other cultures for their children.

In the area of dressing, Nigeria is characterised by the diversity of its traditional attires. It is fashionable for Nigerians to wear the traditional dresses of their regions or ethnic groups of origin. The Igbo men from southeast geo-political region for instance are known for their red caps just as the hat is a peculiar feature of men's traditional wears in the Niger Delta region. In Benue State the "Ange" cloth characterised by its zebra-like black and white stripes is used by the Tiv people while their Idoma neighbours wear similar clothes with red and black stripes. But it is not uncommon for Nigerians to adopt particular attires from other regions which have become very popular. The ensemble "Baban riga" (or "Agbada"), "Buba" and "Shokoto", completed with a cap to match, or the "Kaftan" which are popular among the men-folk in the north (predominantly Hausa/Fulani) are now worn by people from other parts of the country. In western Nigeria, the Yoruba brand of the "Agbada", "Buba", "Shokoto", with the cap to match, has become popular too.

The recently introduced attire, referred to as "resource control", which was initially associated with men from the Niger-Delta region has today become a common outfit across the length and breadth of Nigeria. As for the women-folk, the "Buba", "Iro", "Gele", "Ipele" have been adopted across the regions with minor nuances of style. Although attached to the uniqueness of the traditional attires of their places of origin, Nigerians are also simple lovers of beauty and so do not hesitate to adopt a fashion or an object of beauty that appeals to them. Most of these clothes are products of hand-woven fabrics such as "Akwete", "Aso-Oke", "Batik", "Tie and Dye", "Ota-ochi". These materials are the vogue in the textile industry. Nigerians have carved a niche for themselves in the fashion world. The use of "Ankara" materials by both men and women sets Nigerians apart in fashion at home and internationally. Courtesy: Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation. For more information, please visit: <https://fmic.gov.ng/culture/culture/>



HORN BLOWERS FROM THE NORTH

Splatters of the Soul, the evolving canvas of Adams Abba

OLUSHOLA OLAJOBI

In the ever-expanding landscape of contemporary Nigerian art, a new generation of creators is rising, redefining how we engage with the human condition. Among these compelling new voices is Adams Abba, a visual artist whose work is as psychologically intense as it is visually arresting.

Born in Kaduna, Nigeria, Abba represents the dynamic edge of Gen Z artists who are seamlessly bridging the gap between classical realism and contemporary expressionism.

For art collectors and enthusiasts tracking the pulse of African contemporary art, Adams Abba is a name that demands attention. His canvases

are not just paintings; they are emotional landscapes that invite us to pause, reflect, and engage in critical cultural dialogue.

What immediately sets Abba apart in the crowded Nigerian art scenes is his fearless, experimental approach to his mediums. He is an alchemist of the canvas, fluidly juxtaposing materials that range from the traditional to the everyday.

His palette incorporates charcoal, gouache, acrylic, and oil, but it is his innovative use of coffee that adds an organic, earthy resonance to his textured compositions.

By merging these disparate materials, Abba creates layered works that feel alive. His signature technique which includes incorporating deliber-

ate splatter and blur effects is crucial to his visual storytelling.

These are not accidental marks; they are calculated disruptions that add a kinetic sense of movement. The blur mimics the fleeting nature of memory and emotion, while the splatters evoke a visceral, psychological intensity. It is a technique that visually translates the chaos and beauty of human vulnerability.

As it is general knowledge that raw talent requires a forge, for Abba, that forge was the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, an institution renowned for its rebels in Nigeria modern art history. Graduating with a specialization in painting, he joins a legendary lineage of Zaria-trained artists who have profoundly

shaped the Nigerian artistic narrative.

However, Abba's work is deeply his own. His academic training provided him with a refined understanding of form and realism, which he now masterfully deconstructs. Drawing heavily from his lived experiences in Kaduna and his broader cultural background, his narrative-driven imagery is authentic and grounded. He does not just paint faces; he paints the weight of the stories behind those faces.

At the core of Adams Abba's practice is a relentless exploration of identity, self-reflection, and the complexity of emotions.

In a fast-paced world that rarely allows for stillness, Abba's portraits serve as mirrors. He captures the broader human condition by focusing

on the intimate, often hidden, internal landscapes of his subjects. When you stand before an Adams Abba piece, you are not just observing a portrait; you are stepping into a psychological space. His work fosters a dual dialogue of internal contemplation for the individual viewer and a collective conversation about the societal dynamics that shape our shared reality.

Adams Abba is painting the invisible. By taking the solid foundations of realism and blurring them with the raw, textured energy of expressionism, he captures the fluid, often messy reality of being human. As he continues to evolve, his visually captivating and emotionally resonant works are cementing his place as a dynamic force in modern African visual arts.

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

Is art a time traveler?

If you hear a voice within you say “you cannot paint, then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced.” Van Gogh Globally, many regions are short of words from what their eyes saw. Many are perplexed knowing that various genres of art forms, masterpieces have suffered unexplainable failures.

Many again, have attributed these surprised failures or lack of patronage as a structural issue. We all know that for a film to attract patronage, there must be the diverse heterogeneous audiences, the cinemas that would show these independent artworks, films, books and so on. Just like the film needs the public and the cinemas, so for a book to sell, there must be a robust network of libraries and bookstores. Therefore, for art to also be seen, there must be accessible galleries.

In many societies globally, especially developing economies, the infrastructure is built only to support mass-market imports that the people can relate with. If the local ecosystem is not designed to nurture and showcase high-quality local art, that art will inevitably wither with time, not due to its quality, but due to a lack of a marketplace to call home.

We may be right to describe the situation under discussion as the enigma of starving masterpieces, but have we asked ourselves why great creative excellence does not always equal the audience's patronage? Take for example, our type of world often governed by meritocracy, the logic of lack of patronage by the audience or art lovers, may seem complex. If a film is visually stunning from concept to actualisation and emotionally resonant, if a book is profound and meticulously written, or if a piece of art captures the sublime, one would naturally expect them to attract a crowd. We are taught in schools and other creative sectors that quality rises to the top, but history and the modern marketplace do tell a different story. Have we not seen archives of cinemas littered with box office bombs, that without much ado later became cult classics? What about independent bookstores filled to the brim with literary gems that sell fewer than a hundred copies; and digital galleries that are home to breathtaking arts which garner only a handful of likes?

This disconnect between artistic quality and commercial patronage, is one of the most frustrating challenges faced sadly by creators. Therefore, there is the need for us to understand

why good art often fails to find its audience at the right time. Also, we must look beyond the work itself and examine the complex machinery of psychology, economics, and cultural infrastructure. It is evident that the most immediate barrier to patronage by the public is not a lack of taste in them, but a lack of visible visibility. Today, we find ourselves in an era of unprecedented creative overproduction. This may sound absurd but we do witness how every day, thousands of hours of video are uploaded to streaming platforms, and hundreds of books are published on digital marketplaces.

In this attention-economy, the quality of a film, painting, sculpture or book is irrelevant if the audience does not know it exists. Major studios and publishing houses spend millions on marketing, not necessarily because their product is better, but because they need to buy the curious audience's gaze. We also know that many good independent films often lack the budget for a global press tour or a global massive billboard campaign. Without these markers of presence, no matter how creatively great these works are, they will remain as invisible masterpieces, buried under the sheer volume of mediocre but highly visible contents.

Psychologically, we as humans are wired to seek out cognitive ease. We do tend to gravitate toward things that are familiar because they require less mental energy to process. This is one reason why sequels, reboots, and various genres dominate the market spaces. Any form of good art, in the sense of being creatively innovative or challenging, often demands cognitive strain.

It may explore uncomfortable themes, or utilize an avant-garde visual style. While these elements may make the work artistically superior, they may fail to make it work for the viewer or reader. Most patrons, after a long day of professional or personal labour, often seek passive entertainment rather than an active engagement, and this is sadly true. However, it is disappointing to note that people fall in love with what is easier for them to consume.

Nowadays, the digital age has made it bold to democratize the art, it has firmly replaced old gatekeepers, between an artist and the public with algorithms. Therefore social platforms use recommendation engines ultimately designed to show users more

of what they have already liked, which somehow creates a filter bubble. Have you not noticed that if films do not fit neatly into any form of pre-defined category that the algorithm can track, such films are never recommended? You should know that no matter how sophisticated your creative works are, if the algorithm cannot label the work sadly, it cannot sell it, which can lead to a total lack of patronage from the public regardless of the works intrinsic value.

Art, no matter the form or genre, is meant to be a tool for connection, but when the barrier to that connection is too high, patronage suffers. We must learn or know that the audience is not necessarily unrefined in appreciating or patronizing the arts; they simply are not on the path to the specific key required to unlock the door to these creative artworks. We should also not forget the role of elitism which is often associated with high art or any form of great art masterpieces that subconsciously creates a social barrier to entry. If a book uses overly academic language or a film requires a deep understanding of historical context to be appreciated, it may alienate a significant portion of their potential audience. Let us always remember this, that in a precarious economy, like that of Nigeria and many countries, people are less likely to take risks by parting with their time and money on unknown quantities. Consumers are more likely to spend their limited disposable income on a blockbuster where they are guaranteed a certain level of spectacle, rather than an experimental film that might be a masterpiece but could also be a huge disappointment.

Finally, we must acknowledge that a film might explore a social issue that the public is not ready to face or have interest in. Also, a painting might use a color palette that is a big “annoying contrast” to the current fashion. Shockingly, these works that failed to attract patronage in their own time, may end up as financial best decades later. Unfortunately, the artist may have died without a smile on his face due to bills and debts that made his artistry a mockery before the public of his generation. These art forms we are so much in love with, do not exist in a vacuum.

For any masterpiece to truly live, it must need a curious witness. Paintings, sculptures, films or books do not just exist, they are meant to actually be seen, read, and loved.

TATAFO

Wia awa moats for Benin City?

Dem nor fit born you for Benin City, bury ya placenta for awa soil, and you com grow up to say, you nor no wetin Benin pipo de call “Iya” wey mean MOAT. If you nor still no say dis moat or Iya as Benin pipo de call am, na wetin evri person dem born for hia, or true son of de soil must no, naim be say, dem need to do DNA for you sharp sharp and e get why. You laik, you fit take my yanings like say na joke o! But las las nor be me go open my mouth to yan you say de Benin

Moat no be just ordinary gutter or hole for ground wey gofment do for eroshon wota to de pass.

Una see dis moat I de yan about so, na one of de ogbonge man-made earth-work for de whole wide world bifer de mashin age. We de yan about somtin wey awa ancestors use dia ordinary bare hands and simple tools dig, just to protect de Great Benin Kingdom.

But today, if you waka round de City, from Akpakpava go reach Third Junction, or you pass Sapele Road go reach Sakponba, you go want cry. Abi na de one wey pass Adesogbe road?

Eniways, pipo don yan am say, wetin pipo nor value, dem can't fit to take care of or protect. Jus imagine de moat wey suppose be awa pride wey we for de take make iyanga, awa own “Eiffel Tower” or “Great Wall of China,” don turn emababa, wey mean somtin wey nor serious wey pikins de take play. Na who do us laik dis?

De kwesion wey evribodi dey ask now na be say, na wetin exately happen to all of awa Moats?

Na wetin fit difit awa moats laik yard wey dem trowey bomb put? Bifer we start to yan about de wahala wey de ground now, make we small-small look back, and we go see say awa ancestors dem no be small pipo at all. During de time of Oba Oguola (around 1280 AD) and later Oba

Ewuare de Great (around 1460 AD), naim dem dig all dis moats and na for two main risons:

Defense and Boundari. During dat time so, all de moats no easy to climb, and nor also easy at all to cross. If as at dat time, enemy wan attack de Benin Kingdom, dem go meet dis deep pit wey must to stop dem an bicom dia obstaku. Dis Moat so, long pass 15,000 kilometers and if you com join all of dem togeda for de whole old Benin Empire, na anoda tin be dat. Even de Oyinbo pipo, wey com Benin Empire for 1897 dat time, shocktalize as dem eyes see wetin dem neva see for dem life bifer. Na so dem open mouth for grand gbuor as awa moats be laik abracadabra for dem eye. De rison wey make dem shocktalize na

bicos, dem neva see dat kain engineering wonder wonder work bifer.

Oya na, make we fast-forward to 2026, dis tori don change. Na we even com shocktalized pass de Oyinbo pipo dem. Instead of tourists to dey troop com see dis man-made wonder, na different tin we de see. Pipo don turn de moats to dem latrin, de trowey eni kain dorti dia, kormunities wey de nia de moats don sell dem to de pipo wey fit pay put to build dia houses, shops, and religious houses put. Dis pipo don go fill de place with sand, as dem de do for Lekki for Lagos, com block de way, and build tins put. If moat na human being, him nor go don kpai or give up since? Bicos of all dis yamayama bihavior, awa Moats wey suppose de deep don turn normal grand finish.

But afta we don abuse awa moats finish, de mata com be laik adumadubodi. De rison why be say, as pipo don block de natural flow of wota if heavy rain fall, de wota kukuma de enta pipo houses, religion centas, bizness centas, streets and evri wia. So dia for na, if small rain jus fall, you go see pipo for television de cry beg gofment to com helep dem as wota de fall dem houses, de carri pipo, de fall eletrik poles and many oda tins. The Moat wey suppose helep us de drain wota comot as rain fall, don turn to Wetin de carri wota com different areas. De sand wey rain dey carri followbodi don kukuma fill de remaining place, and de all de fences wey pipo build.

If we wan tell awasef de truth, de blame reach evribodi hand. From gofment wey don carri mega phone de shout for centuries say dem wan revive awa moats but nor do eni tin as no beta law de to gbad de pipo wey sell and buy all dis moats finish. Moats wey de oda kontris wey nor reach awa own na real National Monument wey de bring billions of money to dem from tourism.

We as citizens nor jus try at all, bicos we no jus value wetin we get. We only de see dis Moats as big gutter instead of Big History. If you see ya neighbor de pour dirti inside Moat and you keep kwayet, you don join cause de problem. And pipo just feel say awa history no mata reach de shop, house or religious centas wey dem build on top dis moats.

You fit ask say, “wetin concern me for inside dis moat mata? Afta all, de Moat don old, make we move on.” Whosai! E nor be laik dat! De rison na bicos say, History na Identity. If we lose lose de Moat Kpatakpa, we don lose de physical proof of how great awa pipo be. We no fit de tell awa children tori of Great Benin when de evidence don disappear. And make we nor forget say, money dey dis Moat! If de Moats clean, and we get walkway, museums, and parks round am.



NEWS**Foreign****Israel strikes Beirut for first time since Hezbollah ceasefire**

Israel has attacked Beirut for the first time since it agreed to a ceasefire in the war with the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, putting further pressure on a deal that has failed to stop the conflict.

The air strike hit the city's southern suburbs, known as Dahieh, where Hezbollah is based. Images posted online showed large flames and at least one building heavily damaged.

In a statement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had personally approved the strike which targeted a commander of the group's elite Radwan Force.

Local media reports say members of the unit were meeting when the attack happened at around 20:00 local time (18:00 BST). There has been no reaction from Hezbollah.

This is the first attack to hit Dahieh since US President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire deal between the governments of Israel and Lebanon on 16 April.

Despite the agreement, Israel and Hezbollah have continued with their attacks, accusing each other of violations.

Most of Israel's air strikes have hit southern Lebanon, with the military saying it is striking infrastructure and people linked to Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed militia and political party.

According to Lebanon's health ministry, the attacks have killed more than 120 people across the country in the past week alone, including women and children. The ministry does not distinguish combatants from civilians.

The Israeli military also occupies a strip of Lebanese land along the border, and officials say the aim is to create what

they describe as a Hezbollah-free security zone to protect Israel's northern communities.

In those areas, entire villages have been destroyed, in actions similar to the ones deployed by the Israeli military in Gaza. Rights groups say some cases could amount to war crimes.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, has carried out attacks on Israeli troops in Lebanon and northern Israel with rockets and drones.

Last week, an Israeli defence ministry contractor was killed by a drone while operating an excavator in southern Lebanon.

The group, which was not involved in the negotiations for the ceasefire, had initially indicated it would observe the deal if it was respected by Israel.

Dahieh, once a vibrant and densely populated district, has remained largely empty since the ceasefire, with residents saying they fear returning home because of the threat of Israeli strikes.

Netanyahu said the commander targeted had been responsible for attacks on Israeli communities and for targeting Israeli soldiers.

He said in a statement: "No terrorist is immune - Israel's long arm will reach every enemy and murderer."

Talks between Israel and Lebanon, supported by the US, have continued, but largely at the ambassador level, with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun rejecting a meeting with Netanyahu any time soon.

More than 2,700 people have been killed in Lebanon since 2 March, according to the health ministry.

Israel has announced that 16 soldiers and one civilian have been killed in southern Lebanon, along with two civilians in northern Israel.



PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER :

Esmail Baghaei says Iran will share its views of a US proposal with Pakistani mediators

Hantavirus-hit cruise ship on way to Canary Islands after three evacuated

Two people in a serious condition who were evacuated from a cruise ship with a confirmed outbreak of deadly hantavirus have arrived in the Netherlands for treatment, operator Oceanwide Expeditions has said.

A third passenger in a stable condition was on board an evacuation flight that has been delayed, the operator added.

The MV Hondius is now sailing towards Spain's Canary Islands after being anchored for three days near Cape Verde, an archipelago nation off the West African coast.

The three evacuees were British, Dutch and German. Oceanwide Expeditions said the 65-year-old German evacuee was "closely associated" with a German woman who died on board the ship on 2 May.

The British evacuee has been

identified by several media outlets as 56-year-old ex-police officer Martin Anstee, who is understood to be in a "stable condition" in the Netherlands.

A 41-year-old Dutch crew member is also among those who have been evacuated.

Separately, Dutch media reported on Thursday that a KLM flight attendant had been admitted to hospital in Amsterdam with hantavirus symptoms.

The stewardess reportedly came into contact with a 69-year-old Dutch woman after she was briefly on board a KLM plane in South Africa but was deemed too ill to fly.

The 69-year-old later died, and her death is being investigated as a suspected hantavirus case by South African health authorities.

Three people who were aboard the ship have died since it set sail from Argentina a

month ago.

Meanwhile, two US states have confirmed to the BBC that they are monitoring three passengers who had returned to the US after disembarking earlier. All are currently not displaying symptoms.

Georgia's public health department said two residents were being monitored and were in good health, showing no signs of infection.

Arizona's health department said one resident was being monitored, but was not symptomatic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also confirmed a man who had travelled back to Switzerland after disembarking the ship tested positive for hantavirus and is receiving care at a hospital in Zurich.

"The patient had responded to an email from the ship's operator informing the passen-

gers of the health event," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

A total of 146 people from 23 different countries remain aboard the MV Hondius under "strict precautionary measures", Oceanwide Expeditions said.

In its latest update, the World Health Organization (WHO) said eight cases of hantavirus - three confirmed and five suspected - have so far been identified in people who were on the ship.

South African health authorities have said the Andes strain of hantavirus - prominent in Latin America, where the cruise originated - was found in two of the confirmed patients after tests were carried out by the country's National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

Ivory Coast dissolves electoral commission after opposition criticism

After sustained criticism from the country's opposition, Ivory Coast says it will dissolve the authority responsible for organising elections.

The cabinet decision follows the October presidential vote that saw Alassane Ouattara re-elected to a fourth term, while leading opposition figures were barred from standing.

"In view of the reservations expressed about this institution [the Independent Electoral Commission, or CEI], as well as the criticism it has faced, the Council of Ministers has decided to dissolve it," said government spokesperson and Communications Minister Amadou Coulibaly.

"I cannot tell you at this stage what this new mechanism will be, which will certainly be discussed and put in place at the government level," he said.

"The aim," he said, was "to ensure, in a lasting way, the organisation of peaceful elections by creating greater trust and reassuring all Ivorians and the political class."

Former prime minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan, who was barred from standing last year, called on the government to "open a dialogue with political and civil society organisations to rebuild the electoral system, in the name of peace and stability."

The opposition has regularly and strongly denounced the lack of independence of the electoral commission, which is tasked with organising polls, ensuring the strict application of the electoral code and overseeing the electoral roll.

A 2016 change to the constitution saw Ouattara stand for a controversial third term in a vote that was largely boycotted by the opposition.

Iran considering US proposal as Trump says war will be 'over quickly'

US President Donald Trump has predicted that the war in Iran will be "over quickly" and says that most people "understand" his goal of ending Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

His comments come after Iran said a US proposal to end the war is "still being considered".

US news outlet Axios reported that the White House believes it could be closing in on a 14-point memorandum of understanding with Iran, which could set a framework for more detailed nuclear negotiations.

A senior member of Iran's parliament has dismissed it as a "wish list", while a foreign ministry spokesman said Tehran would share its views of a US proposal with Pakistani mediators.

Pakistan's foreign minister said his country was "endeavouring to convert this ceasefire into a

permanent end to this war".

In its report, Axios describes the memorandum as a one-page, 14-point memo which could set a framework for more detailed nuclear negotiations.

Among the provisions it lists are a suspension on Iranian nuclear enrichment, the lifting of sanctions, and restoring free transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

It cites two US officials and two other sources - all unnamed - whom it describes as briefed on the issues. These sources are reported as saying that many of the terms laid out in the memo would be contingent on a final agreement being reached.

The Reuters news agency reported that two sources briefed on the mediation between the US and Iran had confirmed the information initially reported by Axios, but the proposal has

not been publicly outlined.

Speaking during a virtual campaign event on Wednesday evening, Trump told Republicans in the State of Georgia that he was optimistic that the war would end soon.

He added that most people understood he was right to deny Iran the opportunity to have a nuclear weapon.

Earlier in the day, the president said the US has had "very good talks with Iran in the last 24 hours" and that a deal is possible, emphasising that any hardship caused to Americans - because of high fuel prices - would be short term.

Earlier, Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA): "The American proposal is still being reviewed by Iran and after concluding, it will inform the

Pakistani side of its opinion."

Responding to the Axios report, Ebrahim Rezaei, the spokesperson of the Iranian Parliament's national security and foreign policy commission, wrote on X: "The Americans will not gain anything in a war they are losing that they have not gained in face-to-face negotiations."

He also said Iran "has its finger on the trigger and is ready" and warned that if the US did not "surrender and grant the necessary concessions", Iran would "deliver a harsh and regret-inducing response".

Trump has threatened renewed violence as well, writing on his Truth Social platform that if Iran did not agree to a deal "the bombing starts, and it will be, sadly, at a much higher level and intensity than it was before".

Foreign

NEWS

DR Congo president hints at extending his term and delaying polls

Democratic Republic of Congo's President Félix Tshisekedi has said he may consider seeking a third term in office when his mandate expires in 2028.

Tshisekedi however said any extension of his presidency would only be done by consulting the people through a referendum. The law allows a maximum of two terms.

"I have not asked for a third term, but I'm telling you - if the people want me to have a third term, I will accept," he said on Wednesday.

He added that the elections may not be held on schedule because of the conflict in the east of the country. M23 re-

bels last year seized control of swathes of the North and South Kivu regions, including the key cities of Goma and Bukavu.

Tshisekedi said voting could not be organised without the two regions, adding that the timing of the elections would depend on how quickly the conflict is resolved.

"If we cannot end this war, unfortunately, we will not be able to hold the elections in 2028," Tshisekedi said at a press conference, just his second in the capital, Kinshasa, since being re-elected to office in 2023.

The event at State House overlooking the River Congo lasted more than three hours and was attended by over 200

journalists and supporters.

Congolese government forces have been battling the M23, widely believed to be backed by neighbouring Rwanda, as well as other local armed groups in eastern DR Congo for several years.

Rwanda denies supporting the M23 despite overwhelming evidence and says its military presence in the region is a defensive measure against threats posed by armed groups based in DR Congo.

The US sanctioned some Rwandan army commanders in March, accusing them of fuelling the DR Congo conflict, with fighting persisting despite a US-brokered peace deal.

Tshisekedi on Wednesday

insisted that his priority was to restore peace through diplomacy before leaving office, but blamed Rwanda for obstructing progress.

He accused Rwanda of profiting from DR Congo's rich mineral resources and dragging its feet on implementing the agreement signed in Washington in December.

"It's going to take time, because Rwanda has long profited by looting resources, and that's why the negotiations are dragging on," he said.

He also addressed the recent sanctioning by the US of his predecessor, Joseph Kabila, for allegedly supporting rebel groups.

Ivory Coast dissolves electoral commission after opposition criticism

After sustained criticism from the country's opposition, Ivory Coast says it will dissolve the authority responsible for organising elections.

The cabinet decision follows the October presidential vote that saw Alessane Ouattara re-elected to a fourth term, while leading opposition figures were barred from standing.

"In view of the reservations expressed about this institution [the Independent Electoral Commission, or CEI], as well as the criticism it has faced, the Council of Ministers has decided to dissolve it," said government spokesperson and Communications Minister Amadou Coulibaly.

"I cannot tell you at this stage what this new mechanism will be, which will certainly be discussed and put in place at the government level," he said.

"The aim," he said, was "to ensure, in a lasting way, the organisation of peaceful elections by creating greater trust and reassuring all Ivorians and the political class."

Former prime minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan, who was barred from standing last year, called on the government to "open a dialogue with political and civil society organisations to rebuild the electoral system, in the name of peace and stability."

The opposition has regularly and strongly denounced the lack of independence of the electoral commission, which is tasked with organising polls, ensuring the strict application of the electoral code and overseeing the electoral roll.

A 2016 change to the constitution saw Ouattara stand for a controversial third term in a vote that was largely boycotted by the opposition.



DR CONGO PRESIDENT:

President Félix Tshisekedi said the timing of the next elections would depend on ending the conflict in eastern DR Congo.

Top BJP leader's aide shot dead in violence after Indian state election

The aide to a top leader from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party has been shot dead in violence that broke out after elections in West Bengal state.

Chandranath Rath was personal assistant to Suwendu Adhikari, seen as the front-runner to become the state's new chief minister after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the vote.

Rath was on his way home on Wednesday night when he was killed. Police are investigating but haven't made any arrests yet.

Rath is among at least three people killed in the eastern state since Monday when results were announced. Police said before Rath's death that they had arrested more than 400 people in connection with incidents of violence and intimidation.

Violence is not uncommon in West Bengal after elections, with clashes often breaking out

between rival party workers.

On Monday, the BJP marked a historic victory in the state, which it has never won before, ending a 15-year-rule by Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) party.

Tensions have been high in West Bengal for weeks, with the elections having been conducted in the backdrop of a controversial exercise to clean up voter rolls that left millions of people off the list.

Banerjee has alleged that the exercise removed thousands of non-BJP voters, paving the way for her defeat. The BJP and India's Election Commission have repeatedly denied these allegations.

Rath's murder has escalated tensions, leading to fears of an increase in the scale of violence.

Adhikari called the death "heartwrenching". "This is a cold-blooded murder," he told reporters.

Police said they had found a

car that was used in the crime but that its licence plate number was incorrect.

"We also found live rounds and fired cartridges from the spot," West Bengal police chief Siddh Nath Gupta said.

A witness told media that the shot was fired by a person on a motorcycle, but police have not commented on this or the number of attackers.

The TMC, in a statement, strongly condemned the killing.

"Violence and political killings have no place in a democracy and the guilty must be held accountable at the earliest," the party said, demanding a court-monitored investigation.

Both parties have claimed that their workers have been killed in post-poll violence - the BJP two and the TMC three, each blaming the other. Police have not confirmed the party affiliations of the two victims other than Rath.

Adhikari and other BJP leaders alleged that law and order in West Bengal had deteriorated under Banerjee's rule.

"As soon as our chief minister takes the oath and our government assumes power, everything will be set right though it may take a little time," said BJP's Sukanta Majumdar, a junior federal minister.

Suwendu Adhikari is widely seen as the front runner to become West Bengal chief minister

The state's new chief minister is expected to be sworn in on Saturday. The BJP has not confirmed the name yet, but Adhikari, a former TMC leader who moved to the BJP, is the front runner.

The BJP had on Monday secured a landslide victory in the state polls, winning 207 seats of 294. Adhikari also defeated Banerjee from the Bhabanipur constituency, which was her stronghold.

Islamic State-linked women arrive home in Australia from Syria

Thirteen women and children with links to the Islamic State (IS) group have arrived home in Australia, after spending years in detention in Syria.

The group, who had been living in the al-Roj camp since 2019, had been the subject of heated political debate in Australia, with the government saying it would give them no help to return.

Three women and eight children - believed to be members of the same family - landed in Melbourne late in the afternoon, with another woman and her child arriving in Sydney shortly afterwards. Reports said she was taken into police custody.

Police have said some of the women will be arrested and charged after arriving, while others face "continued investigations".

The group that arrived in Melbourne is reportedly made up of grandmother Kawwar Abbas and her adult daughters Zeinab and Zahra Ahmed, and their eight children.

Abbas is married to Mohamad Ahmad, who ran a charity that Australian police suspect was used to send cash to IS. He denied the accusation in an interview with the national broadcaster ABC in 2019, after it tracked him down to a prison in Syria.

The woman arriving in Sydney has been named by local media as Janai Safar - she is accompanied by her nine-year-old son, who was born in Syria.

Police boarded the plane and took Safar into custody on arrival, Australian media reported. The Age newspaper showed pictures of her being escorted from Sydney airport by police

in a vehicle.

Safar is a former Sydney nursing student who travelled to Syria in 2015 and reportedly married an IS fighter.

In an interview with the Australian newspaper in 2019 she said it had been her own decision to go to Syria and that she did not want to return to Australia for fear of being arrested and having her child taken from her.

On Wednesday police commissioner Krissy Barratt confirmed some of the women would be arrested and charged. The potential charges included terrorism offences such as entering, or remaining in, declared areas, and crimes against humanity offences, such as engaging in slave trading.

The group of 13 are part of a larger cohort of 34 believed to include wives, widows and children of IS fighters who left the camp in February but returned for "technical reasons" with the Australian government refusing to officially repatriate them.

One member of the cohort was banned from returning to Australia earlier this year when the government issued a "temporary exclusion order", meaning they cannot return for up to two years. That person is not among the group that landed on Thursday.

Boarding a connecting flight to Melbourne in Doha, the women told a reporter for the national broadcaster ABC they were excited to return home, saying Australia was "like paradise" to them.

"We just want our children to be safe. It was like hell [in Syria] for them," one said.

Feature

Infrastructure: The foundation we're still building

OGUE UZODIMMA

INTRODUCTION: THE SKELETON OF DEVELOPMENT

If a nation is a living organism, infrastructure is its skeleton. Roads carry goods like arteries carry blood. Electricity powers homes and industries like the heart powers the body. Ports and airports connect a country to the world like lungs connect the body to oxygen. Without strong infrastructure, an economy cannot breathe, move, or grow.

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, has long struggled with an infrastructure deficit that undermines its development potential. Despite being a \$250 billion economy in 2026, the country's infrastructure stock stands at just 35% of GDP — far below the 70% benchmark recommended by the World Bank for sustainable growth.

This feature examines Nigeria's infrastructure challenges, compares them with global best practices, and explores how bridging the gap can unlock economic prosperity.

THE SCALE OF NIGERIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIT

1. The Numbers Don't Lie

The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that Nigeria requires \$100 billion annually for the next 30 years to close its infrastructure gap. Current spending is less than \$20 billion per year, leaving an annual shortfall of \$80 billion.

Transportation: Nigeria has 195,000km of roads, but only 30% are paved and less than 10% are in good condition. The average travel time from Lagos to Abuja — a 750km journey — is 12 hours due to poor road conditions and congestion.

Power: Nigeria's installed electricity capacity is 13,000MW, but actual generation hovers around 4,000-5,000MW for 220 million people. South Africa, with a population of 60 million, generates over 50,000MW. This means Nigeria has one of the lowest per capita electricity consumption rates in the world at 180kWh, compared to 4,800kWh in South Africa and 13,000kWh in the U.S.

Housing: Nigeria faces a housing deficit of over 20 million units. The average Nigerian spends 60% of their income on rent in urban areas, compared to 30% in developed countries.

Water and Sanitation: Only 67% of Nigerians have access to basic drinking water services, and 44% lack access to improved sanitation. Open defecation remains prevalent in rural areas, contributing to disease outbreaks.

2. The Economic Cost

Poor infrastructure costs Nigeria 2-4% of GDP annually in lost productivity. Businesses spend up to 40% of their operating costs on providing alternative infrastructure — diesel generators for power, boreholes for water, and private security for protection.

For manufacturers, unreliable power means higher production costs, making Nigerian goods less competitive than imports. For farmers, bad roads mean post-harvest losses of up to 50%. For students, lack of electricity means studying by candlelight and



BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

This “build-neglect-rebuild” cycle is wasteful and unsustainable. The cost of maintaining infrastructure is 10-15% of the construction cost annually, but the cost of rebuilding is 100%.

limited access to digital learning.

SECTOR-BY-SECTOR ANALYSIS

1. Power Sector – The Achilles' Heel
Nigeria's power sector has been in crisis for decades. The sector was privatized in 2013, with generation and distribution companies handed over to private investors. Yet, 13 years later, the situation has barely improved.

Key challenges:

- Gas supply constraints: 80% of Nigeria's power comes from gas-fired plants, but pipeline vandalism and gas shortages limit supply.

- Transmission bottlenecks: The national grid can only wheel 5,000MW, even when generation exceeds that.

- Collection losses: Distribution companies lose 40-50% of revenue to theft and non-payment.

- Tariff issues: Electricity tariffs are not cost-reflective, making it difficult for distribution companies to invest in infrastructure.

Bright spots: The Dangote Refinery's 1,200MW captive power plant and the proliferation of solar mini-grids are showing alternative pathways. Over 500 solar mini-grids have been installed across rural Nigeria since 2020, providing electricity to 200,000 households.

2. Transportation – Roads, Rail, and Ports

Roads: The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, a 127km corridor that carries 40% of Nigeria's freight, has been under reconstruction for over 10 years. The Abuja-Kano Road and the Second Niger Bridge are other flagship projects that have faced delays due to funding and contractual issues.

Rail: Nigeria's rail network is undergoing a revival. The Lagos-Ibadan Standard Gauge Railway (156km) and the Abuja-Kaduna Railway (186km)

are operational. The Lagos-Kano Standard Gauge Railway (1,200km) is under construction and expected to be completed by 2028. Rail offers a cheaper and safer alternative for freight and passenger movement.

Ports: Nigeria's ports, particularly Apapa and Tin Can in Lagos, are notorious for congestion. Cargo can take 30-45 days to clear due to inefficient customs processes and inadequate port infrastructure. The Lekki Deep Sea Port, commissioned in 2023, is a game-changer with the capacity to handle 2.7 million containers annually and accommodate larger vessels.

3. Digital Infrastructure – The Quiet Revolution

While physical infrastructure lags, digital infrastructure is advancing rapidly. Nigeria's broadband penetration reached 48% in 2025, up from 23% in 2020. Mobile phone penetration is over 90%, with 160 million active SIM cards.

The expansion of 4G and the rollout of 5G in major cities are enabling e-commerce, fintech, and remote work. Nigeria's tech ecosystem has produced five unicorns — Flutterwave, Andela, Jumia, Interswitch, and Opay — valued at over \$1 billion each.

However, the digital divide remains wide. Rural areas have limited connectivity, and the cost of data remains high for average Nigerians.

GLOBAL COMPARISONS – WHAT NIGERIA CAN LEARN

1. China – Infrastructure at Scale

China's infrastructure transformation over the past 40 years is unprecedented. The country built 40,000km of high-speed rail, 160,000km of expressways, and 250 airports between 2000 and 2025. This infrastructure investment contributed to lifting 800

million people out of poverty.

Lesson for Nigeria: Long-term planning and massive public investment can transform infrastructure. China's Belt and Road Initiative also shows how infrastructure can be a tool for economic diplomacy.

2. Rwanda – The African Model

Rwanda, a country with no natural resources and a population of 13 million, has achieved remarkable infrastructure progress since the 1994 genocide. Kigali is now one of Africa's cleanest and most organized cities, with reliable electricity, good roads, and efficient public transportation.

Lesson for Nigeria: Political will, zero tolerance for corruption, and a focus on maintenance can deliver results even with limited resources.

3. India – Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

India has successfully used PPPs to develop airports, ports, and highways. The Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and the Mumbai Metro are examples of PPP projects that have delivered world-class infrastructure.

Lesson for Nigeria: PPPs can bring private capital and expertise into infrastructure development, reducing the burden on government finances. **THE FINANCING CHALLENGE – WHO PAYS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE?***

Infrastructure is capital-intensive and has a long gestation period. Government alone cannot fund Nigeria's infrastructure needs.

1. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

PPPs allow private investors to finance, build, and operate infrastructure projects in exchange for revenue streams like tolls or user fees. The Lekki-Ikoyi Link Bridge in Lagos is a successful PPP toll road.

However, PPPs in Nigeria face challenges including regulatory uncertainty, contract enforcement issues, and public skepticism about tolling.

2. Infrastructure Bonds

The federal government has issued Sukuk bonds to finance road construction. The 2024 N130 billion Sukuk financed 44 road projects

across the six geopolitical zones. Infrastructure bonds allow citizens to invest in national development while earning returns.

3. Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)

Institutions like the World Bank, AfDB, and Islamic Development Bank provide concessional loans for infrastructure projects. The AfDB's \$1.5 billion loan for the Nigeria Electrification Project is an example.

4. Diaspora Remittances

Nigerians in the diaspora remitted \$21 billion in 2025. If even 10% of this was channeled into infrastructure investment through diaspora bonds, it could generate \$2 billion annually for infrastructure development.

THE ROLE OF MAINTENANCE CULTURE

Nigeria has a poor maintenance culture. Roads are built but not maintained. Buildings deteriorate rapidly. Equipment breaks down and is abandoned rather than repaired.

This “build-neglect-rebuild” cycle is wasteful and unsustainable. The cost of maintaining infrastructure is 10-15% of the construction cost annually, but the cost of rebuilding is 100%.

Solution: Establish a National Infrastructure Maintenance Fund, financed by a small percentage of fuel tax or user fees. Introduce performance-based contracts where contractors are responsible for maintenance for 5-10 years after construction.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Climate change is making infrastructure development more complex. Roads are washed away by floods. Power lines are damaged by storms. Buildings are threatened by sea-level rise.

Climate-resilient infrastructure* means designing infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events. This includes elevated roads in flood-prone areas, storm-resistant power lines, and heat-resistant building materials.

The cost of building climate-resilient infrastructure is 5-10% higher than conventional infrastructure, but it reduces long-term repair and replacement costs by 30-40%.

PART VII: THE INFRASTRUCTURE-AGRICULTURE NEXUS

Infrastructure and agriculture are deeply interconnected. Without good roads, farmers cannot transport produce to markets. Without electricity, they cannot store perishable goods. Without irrigation, they depend on unpredictable rainfall.

The Kano-Maiduguri Road, for example, is a critical agricultural corridor connecting the food-producing north to the consuming south. Its poor condition increases transportation costs and food prices across the country.

Investing in rural infrastructure — feeder roads, cold storage, and rural electrification — can increase agricultural productivity by 25-30% and reduce post-harvest losses by 40%.

FEATURE

Religious intolerance – healing divides in a diverse nation and world

RAYMOND OSOGBE

FAITH IS A BRIDGE, NOT A BARRIER

Religion is meant to be a source of hope, moral guidance, and community. For billions of people worldwide, faith provides meaning, purpose, and a framework for ethical living. Yet, in Nigeria and across the globe, religion has too often become a fault line — a basis for division, discrimination, and violence.

Nigeria is one of the most religiously diverse nations on earth. Roughly 50% of the population identifies as Muslim, 45% as Christian, and 5% as adherents of indigenous or other faiths. This diversity should be a strength — a tapestry of beliefs that enriches national culture and identity. Instead, it has frequently been weaponized for political and economic gain, leading to cycles of mistrust and conflict.

Globally, the picture is similar. The Pew Research Center reported in 2025 that religious restrictions and social hostilities involving religion reached a 14-year high in 84 countries. From sectarian violence in the Middle East to hate crimes against religious minorities in Europe and Asia, religious intolerance is a growing threat to global peace and stability.

This feature explores the roots of religious intolerance in Nigeria and the world, its developmental consequences, and the pathways to building a more tolerant and cohesive society.

PART I: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT – A HISTORY OF TENSIONS**1. The Colonial Legacy**

Nigeria's religious fault lines have historical roots. Colonial administrators adopted a policy of "indirect rule," governing the predominantly Muslim north through traditional emirs while introducing Christianity and Western education in the south. This created two parallel systems with different cultural and educational trajectories.

At independence in 1960, these regional and religious differences were already entrenched, shaping political alignments and national discourse.

2. The Sharia Controversy and Its Aftermath

The adoption of Sharia criminal law in 12 northern states between 1999 and 2001 reignited religious tensions. While Sharia applies only to Muslims, its introduction sparked protests and counter-protests in mixed-population states, leading to clashes that claimed thousands of lives in Kaduna, Kano, and Plateau.

3. Boko Haram and Violent Extremism

The emergence of Boko Haram in 2009 marked a dangerous escalation. The group's ideology rejects Western education and seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria. Their attacks on churches, mosques, schools, and markets have killed over 40,000 people and displaced 2.5 million since 2009.

Boko Haram's ideology does not represent mainstream Islam, but its actions have deepened suspicion between Muslim and Christian communities, particularly in the North East.

4. Farmer-Herder Conflicts

While often framed as religious, the



RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

farmer-herder conflicts in the Middle Belt have complex drivers including land scarcity, climate change, and population growth. However, the fact that many farmers are predominantly Christian while many herders are Muslim has given the conflict a religious dimension, exacerbating tensions in states like Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa.

PART II: THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE – RELIGION UNDER STRESS**1. The Rise of Religious Nationalism**

In several countries, religion is being fused with national identity to create exclusionary narratives. In India, Hindu nationalism has led to increased discrimination against Muslims. In Myanmar, Buddhist nationalism has fueled violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority. In some European countries, far-right groups use Christian identity as a basis for anti-immigrant sentiment targeting Muslims.

2. Islamophobia and Antisemitism

Islamophobia has risen sharply in Western countries since 9/11, with Muslims facing discrimination in employment, housing, and public spaces. Similarly, antisemitism has seen a resurgence, with the Anti-Defamation League reporting a 36% increase in antisemitic incidents globally in 2024.

3. Persecution of Religious Minorities

According to Open Doors International, over 365 million Christians faced high levels of persecution in 2025, particularly in countries like North Korea, Afghanistan, and Nigeria. Muslims face persecution in China's Xinjiang region, while Yazidis, Hindus, and other minorities also face targeted violence in various parts of the world.

PART III: THE DEVELOPMENTAL COST OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Religious intolerance is not just a moral issue; it has tangible economic and social consequences.

1. Economic Impact

Conflicts driven by religious intolerance

destroy infrastructure, disrupt economic activity, and deter investment. The World Bank estimates that conflict reduces a country's GDP growth by 2.3 percentage points annually. In Nigeria's North East, economic activity has contracted by 40% since 2014 due to Boko Haram's insurgency.

Tourism is also affected. Countries perceived as unsafe due to religious tensions lose billions in tourism revenue. The Middle East, home to some of the world's most significant religious sites, has seen tourism decline by 25% in conflict-affected areas.

2. Human Capital Loss

Religious intolerance often targets schools and educational institutions. Boko Haram's name translates to "Western education is forbidden," and the group has attacked over 1,000 schools in northern Nigeria. This has deprived hundreds of thousands of children, particularly girls, of education.

When children are denied education, the country loses future doctors, engineers, teachers, and leaders. The intergenerational impact is profound.

3. Social Cohesion and Trust

Societies with high levels of religious intolerance have lower levels of social trust. People are less likely to cooperate with those from different religious backgrounds, reducing civic participation and community development. Trust is the invisible glue that holds societies together — once it breaks, everything else becomes difficult.

4. Displacement and Humanitarian Crisis

Religious conflict is a major driver of displacement. Nigeria has over 3.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of 2025, many displaced due to religiously-motivated violence. IDP camps are overcrowded, with limited access to food, water, healthcare, and education, creating a humanitarian crisis that strains government resources.

PART IV: THE ROOT CAUSES – WHY INTOLERANCE PERSISTS**1. Poverty and Inequality**

Poverty creates fertile ground for extremist ideologies. When people feel economically marginalized and politically excluded, they become more susceptible to narratives that blame other religious groups for their plight. In northern Nigeria, where poverty rates exceed 60%, extremist groups exploit economic desperation for recruitment.

2. Political Manipulation

Politicians sometimes exploit religious differences to mobilize voters and consolidate power. "Religious identity politics" turns faith into a voting bloc rather than a personal conviction. This politicization deepens divisions and makes genuine dialogue more difficult.

3. Misinformation and Hate Speech

Social media has amplified religious hate speech. False information spread on WhatsApp and Facebook has triggered mob violence in several Nigerian communities. A 2024 report by the Centre for Democracy and Development found that 65% of religious hate speech in Nigeria originates online.

4. Lack of Religious Literacy

Many people hold stereotypes about other religions without understanding their beliefs and practices. This ignorance breeds fear and suspicion. In Nigeria, many Christians have never read the Quran, and many Muslims have never read the Bible, yet both groups form opinions about each other based on hearsay and prejudice.

PART V: SUCCESS STORIES – WHAT WORKS**1. Indonesia – The Pancasila Model**

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, has maintained religious pluralism through its Pancasila ideology, which recognizes six official religions and promotes "unity in diversity." Religious leaders in Indonesia regularly engage in interfaith dialogue, and the

The country has a long history of peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians, with interfaith marriages and joint celebrations of religious holidays being common.

government enforces laws against religious discrimination.

2. Senegal – Sufi Tolerance

Senegal's dominant Sufi Islamic tradition emphasizes tolerance, moderation, and coexistence. The country has a long history of peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians, with interfaith marriages and joint celebrations of religious holidays being common.

3. Canada – Multicultural Policy

Canada's official multiculturalism policy recognizes and protects religious diversity. The government funds religious education for all faiths and has strong anti-discrimination laws. Canada consistently ranks among the most tolerant countries in global surveys.

PART VI: PATHWAYS TO RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN NIGERIA**1. Interfaith Dialogue and Engagement**

Nigeria has several interfaith platforms, including the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) and the Christian-Muslim Peace Initiative. These platforms bring religious leaders together to address conflicts and promote mutual understanding.

At the community level, joint Christian-Muslim peace committees in Plateau and Kaduna have successfully mediated local conflicts and prevented escalation.

2. Education and Curriculum Reform

Schools have a critical role in promoting tolerance. Nigeria's education curriculum should include religious literacy — teaching students about different faiths, their similarities, and their contributions to society. This should be done without promoting any particular religion.

3. Role of Religious Leaders

Religious leaders wield significant influence in Nigeria. When they preach tolerance and coexistence from the pulpit and mosque, their congregations listen. The Sultan of Sokoto and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) have both issued joint statements condemning religious violence and calling for peace.

Climate Change: The silent crisis reshaping Nigeria and the world

EJIMA UMUERRI

INTRODUCTION: BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Climate change has moved from the realm of scientific reports and international conferences into the daily reality of millions of Nigerians. It is no longer an abstract concept discussed at COP summits in faraway cities. It is the cracked soil in Yobe where millet refuses to grow. It is the floodwaters that swallowed entire neighborhoods in Bayelsa in 2022. It is the heatwave that made Lagos feel like an oven in March 2024, with temperatures hitting 42°C and hospitals recording a spike in heat-related admissions.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been unequivocal: human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, have warmed the planet by 1.2°C since the pre-industrial era. That may sound small, but the consequences are massive and nonlinear. For Nigeria, a country of 220 million people with a coastline stretching 853km and a vast Sahelian belt in the north, the stakes could not be higher.

This feature examines how climate change is unfolding in Nigeria, how it mirrors and diverges from global trends, and what pathways exist for mitigation and adaptation.

PART I: NIGERIA'S CLIMATE REALITY – A NATION UNDER PRESSURE

Nigeria's geography makes it uniquely vulnerable. The country sits at the intersection of three climate zones: the arid Sahel in the north, the humid savannah in the middle, and the tropical rainforest and coastal belt in the south. Each zone faces distinct climate threats.

1. Desertification in the North

The Sahara Desert is advancing southward at an estimated rate of 0.6km per year. States like Borno, Yobe, Katsina, and Sokoto are witnessing shrinking arable land, disappearing water bodies, and declining rainfall. Lake Chad, once one of Africa's largest freshwater lakes spanning 25,000 sq km in the 1960s, has shrunk to less than 2,500 sq km today. The lake sustains over 30 million people across Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Its recession has triggered livelihood crises, mass migration, and, unfortunately, recruitment opportunities for insurgent groups like Boko Haram who exploit environmental desperation.

For farmers and pastoralists in the north, the rainy season has become erratic. When it comes, it is often intense and brief, causing flash floods. When it fails, drought sets in. This has intensified the farmer-herder conflict, as herders move southward in search of pasture, leading to clashes with farming communities.

2. Flooding in the Middle Belt and South

If the north is drying up, the south is drowning. Nigeria's flood risk has escalated due to three factors: heavy rainfall intensified by climate change, poor drainage infrastructure in urban



FLOODED AREA

areas, and the release of water from dams in neighboring Cameroon, particularly the Lagdo Dam.

The 2012 floods affected 7.7 million people. The 2022 floods were worse, killing over 600 people, displacing 1.3 million, and destroying 200,000 homes and 500,000 hectares of farmland across 34 states. States like Kogi, Benue, Anambra, and Bayelsa were submerged for weeks. Beyond the immediate destruction, floods contaminate water sources, trigger cholera outbreaks, and destroy crops just before harvest, worsening food insecurity.

Urban flooding in Lagos tells another story. With 20 million people and vast informal settlements built on wetlands and drainage channels, a single heavy rainfall can paralyze the city. The 2023 and 2024 rainy seasons saw entire districts like Ajegunle, Surulere, and parts of Lekki submerged for days.

3. Coastal Erosion and Sea Level Rise

Nigeria's coastline is eroding at an average rate of 25 meters per year in some areas. In Ayetoro, a fishing community in Ondo State, over 100 houses have been lost to the sea since 2015. The community is now known as "the sinking town."

Rising sea levels threaten Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Calabar — cities that host critical economic infrastructure including ports, oil terminals, and millions of residents. A 1-meter rise in sea level could displace over 2 million people in Lagos alone and submerge vast portions of the Niger Delta.

4. Heatwaves and Public Health

Nigeria is experiencing more frequent and intense heatwaves. In April 2024, parts of the country recorded temperatures above 45°C for consecutive days. Heatwaves are silent killers, particularly for the elderly, children, and outdoor workers. They also affect

crop yields, reduce labor productivity, and increase energy demand for cooling — which Nigeria's fragile grid cannot sustain.

PART II: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT – A PLANET AT A TIPPING POINT

Nigeria's climate challenges are part of a global pattern. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) confirmed that 2024 was the hottest year on record, surpassing 2023. The last 10 years have been the warmest decade since records began in 1880.

Key global trends:

- Melting ice and rising seas: Greenland and Antarctica are losing ice at a rate of 150 billion tons per year. Global sea levels have risen by 20cm since 1900 and are projected to rise another 30-60cm by 2100.

- Extreme weather: The frequency of extreme weather events has increased fivefold since 1970. Cyclones in the Pacific, wildfires in Australia and Canada, and heatwaves in Europe have all become more severe.

- Biodiversity loss: The IPCC estimates that 1 million species are at risk of extinction due to climate change and habitat loss.

The 2015 Paris Agreement set a target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. As of 2026, we are on track for 2.7°C of warming based on current national pledges — a trajectory that scientists warn will lead to catastrophic and irreversible impacts.

PART III: THE ECONOMIC COST TO NIGERIA

Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it's an economic one. The World Bank estimates that climate change could push an additional 100 million people into poverty in Nigeria by 2050 if no action is taken.

Agriculture: Agriculture contributes 24% of Nigeria's GDP and employs 35% of the workforce. But crop yields for maize, sorghum, and millet could decline by 20-30% by 2050 due to heat stress and water scarcity. Livestock production is also affected as grazing land diminishes.

Oil and Gas: Ironically, Nigeria's main revenue source is also a contributor to climate change. The oil and gas sector accounts for 80% of export earnings and 50% of government revenue, but gas flaring and oil spills in the Niger Delta have degraded the environment for decades. As the world

transitions to renewables, Nigeria faces the risk of "stranded assets" — oil reserves that may never be exploited.

Health: The World Health Organization estimates that climate change will cause 250,000 additional deaths per year globally between 2030-2050 from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress. In Nigeria, malaria transmission zones are expanding as warmer temperatures allow mosquitoes to survive at higher altitudes.

Migration: Climate-induced migration is already happening. The UN estimates that 1.5 million Nigerians have been displaced internally due to environmental factors since 2015. This puts pressure on urban centers that are already struggling with housing and services.

PART IV: NIGERIA'S POLICY RESPONSE – PROMISES VS. REALITY

Nigeria has not been silent on climate change.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): Under the Paris Agreement, Nigeria committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% unconditionally and 47% conditionally with international support by 2030. The country also pledged to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060.

Energy Transition Plan (2022): Launched by the federal government, this plan outlines how Nigeria will transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. It envisions \$410 billion in investment by 2060 and aims to provide universal energy access by 2030 using solar as a key component.

Great Green Wall: Nigeria is a key participant in the African Union's Great Green Wall initiative — a project to plant an 8,000km belt of trees across the Sahel to combat desertification. Nigeria's section covers 11 states and aims to restore 4 million hectares of degraded land.



The oil and gas sector accounts for 80% of export earnings and 50% of government revenue, but gas flaring and oil spills in the Niger Delta have degraded the environment for decades.

FEATURE

Feeding a Nation while fighting for the Paradox of Plenty

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Nigeria is often described as a country blessed with agricultural abundance. With 84 million hectares of arable land, diverse agro-ecological zones, and a population of over 220 million providing a ready market, the potential for food self-sufficiency seems obvious. Yet, the reality on the ground tells a different story.

In 2025, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 33 million Nigerians face acute food insecurity — the highest number in West Africa. Food inflation stood at 40.7% in early 2026, making basic staples like rice, beans, and tomatoes unaffordable for many households. The irony is painful: a nation with vast farmland and millions of farmers is struggling to feed itself.

This feature explores why Nigeria's agricultural sector is underperforming despite its potential, how global agricultural trends offer lessons, and what reforms are needed to transform food production from subsistence to commercial scale.

PART I: THE CURRENT STATE OF NIGERIAN AGRICULTURE**1. The Dominance of Smallholder Farming**

Over 90% of Nigeria's food is produced by smallholder farmers — individuals cultivating less than 2 hectares of land. These farmers rely primarily on rain-fed agriculture, rudimentary tools like hoes and cutlasses, and traditional seed varieties with low yields.

The average Nigerian farmer produces 1.2 tons of maize per hectare compared to 10 tons per hectare in the United States. For rice, Nigeria's yield is 2 tons per hectare versus 8 tons in China. The productivity gap is massive, and it explains why Nigeria remains a net food importer despite its agricultural resources.

2. Post-Harvest Losses – A Silent Drain

Nigeria loses an estimated 50% of its agricultural produce to post-harvest losses. Tomatoes rot on the road from Kano to Lagos due to poor storage and transportation. Grains are eaten by pests in inadequate silos. Fruits and vegetables spoil because there is no cold chain infrastructure.

The World Bank estimates that these losses cost Nigeria \$9 billion annually — money that could be reinvested into the sector or used to stabilize food prices.

3. Insecurity and Its Impact on Farming

The past decade has seen agriculture disrupted by insecurity. In the North East, Boko Haram's insurgency has displaced over 2 million farmers. In the North West, banditry has made farming dangerous, with kidnappings for ransom becoming common. In the Middle Belt, farmer-herder conflicts have claimed thousands of lives and displaced farming communities.

When farmers abandon their land out of fear, food production drops and food prices rise. Insecurity has turned once-productive areas like Benue, Plateau, and Zamfara into food-deficit zones.



WOMAN FARMERS

4. Climate Change and Agricultural Stress

Erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts in the north, and floods in the south are making farming increasingly unpredictable. The 2022 floods alone destroyed over 500,000 hectares of farmland and wiped out harvests worth billions of naira.

Crop cycles are shifting. The planting season, once predictable between April and May, now varies, catching farmers unprepared and reducing yields.

PART II: THE GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE – LESSONS FOR NIGERIA

Globally, agriculture is undergoing a transformation driven by technology, climate adaptation, and changing consumer demands.

1. Precision Agriculture

In countries like the U.S., Israel, and the Netherlands, farmers use satellite imagery, drones, and soil sensors to monitor crop health, optimize water usage, and apply fertilizers precisely. This has increased yields while reducing environmental impact. Israel, a country with 60% desert land, now produces 95% of its own food and exports agricultural technology to over 100 countries.

2. Genetically Modified and Drought-Resistant Crops

To combat climate stress, countries are adopting drought-resistant and pest-resistant crop varieties. India's Bt cotton revolution increased yields by 50% and reduced pesticide use. In Africa, countries like Kenya and South Africa are cultivating drought-tolerant maize varieties developed by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF).

3. Agri-Tech and Digital Platforms

Technology is bridging the gap between farmers and markets. In Kenya, M-Farm connects farmers directly to buyers via SMS, eliminating middlemen and increasing farmers' income by 30%. In India, platforms like DeHaat provide farmers with input

supply, advisory services, and market access through a single app.

4. Sustainable Farming Practices

The global push is toward sustainable agriculture — farming methods that protect the environment while maintaining productivity. This includes organic farming, conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and integrated pest management.

PART III: WHY NIGERIA'S AGRICULTURE IS STUCK IN SUBSISTENCE**1. Limited Access to Finance**

Only 4% of commercial bank lending in Nigeria goes to agriculture, despite the sector contributing 24% of GDP. Banks consider agriculture high-risk due to unpredictable weather,

pests, and lack of collateral. Without access to affordable credit, farmers cannot buy improved seeds, fertilizers, or machinery.

2. Poor Infrastructure

Bad roads make it expensive to transport produce from rural farms to urban markets. In some cases, transportation costs account for 40% of the final price of food. Lack of electricity means no cold storage, leading to spoilage. Limited irrigation means farmers are entirely dependent on rainfall.

3. Inadequate Extension Services

Agricultural extension officers — who are supposed to train farmers on modern techniques — are few and under-resourced. Nigeria has one extension officer for every 10,000 farmers, compared to 1:400 in developed countries. Most farmers rely on traditional knowledge passed down through generations.

4. Policy Inconsistency

Nigeria's agricultural policies have changed with every administration. The Agricultural Transformation Agenda (2011-2015), the Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016-2020), and the current National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy all have good intentions but suffer from poor implementation, funding gaps, and lack of continuity.

5. Land Tenure System

The Land Use Act of 1978 vests land ownership in state governors, making it difficult for farmers to use land as collateral for loans. The process of obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy is cumbersome and expensive, discouraging investment in large-scale farming.

PART IV: THE FOOD IMPORT BILL – A NATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT

Despite its agricultural potential, Nigeria spends over \$10 billion annually on food imports. The top imported food items include wheat, rice, sugar, fish, and milk.

Wheat: Nigeria consumes 5.5 mil-

lion tons of wheat annually but produces less than 1 million tons. The rest is imported, mainly from Russia and the U.S. This makes bread and pasta prices vulnerable to global supply shocks, as seen during the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022.

Rice: While Nigeria has achieved 70% self-sufficiency in rice production following the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (2015), the country still imports 2 million tons annually to meet demand. Smuggling across borders remains a challenge.

Fish: Nigeria consumes 3.2 million tons of fish annually but produces only 1.1 million tons. The deficit is covered by imports worth \$1.2 billion per year.

This heavy reliance on imports drains foreign exchange, weakens the naira, and exposes Nigeria to global food price volatility.

PART V: GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES – PROGRESS AND GAPS**1. Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP)**

Launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2015, ABP provides loans in cash and kind to smallholder farmers to boost production of rice, maize, and wheat. The program has supported over 4.5 million farmers and increased rice production from 3.7 million tons in 2015 to 5.3 million tons in 2023.

However, the program has faced challenges including loan recovery issues, diversion of inputs, and concerns about transparency.

2. National Agricultural Growth Scheme and Agro-Pocket (NAGS-AP)

Introduced in 2023, this scheme aims to provide subsidized inputs to 500,000 farmers through a digital voucher system. It's designed to be more transparent than previous subsidy programs.

3. Green Imperative Programme

A \$1.1 billion agreement between Nigeria and Brazil to mechanize agriculture through the supply of 10,000 tractors and 50,000 implements. The program also includes training for 100,000 agricultural extension workers.

PART VI: THE ROLE OF YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Nigeria's youth population — 60% under 25 — represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Unemployment among youth is over 40%, yet many see agriculture as a dirty, unprofitable venture for the older generation.

That perception is changing with the rise of agri-tech startups and youth-led agricultural enterprises.

Agri-tech innovations in Nigeria:

- *Farmcrowdy:* Allows Nigerians to sponsor farms digitally and earn returns from harvests.

- *ThriveAgric:* Provides smallholder farmers with access to finance, inputs, and markets.

- *Crop2Cash:* Offers digital payment solutions and credit scoring for farmers.

These platforms are making agriculture attractive to young graduates by introducing technology, data, and business models into farming.

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Only 4% of commercial bank lending in Nigeria goes to agriculture, despite the sector contributing 24% of GDP. Banks consider agriculture high-risk due to unpredictable weather, pests, and lack of collateral

The Hidden Toll: How mental health challenges are undermining

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The Increasing rate of mental health challenges among students is quite alarming. This growing concern has prompted experts to warn that these struggles pose serious challenges which affect their concentration, motivation and overall academic well-being.

What then is mental health?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as a "state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well, and work well, and contribute to their community." Hence, it captures how individuals think, feel and behave. However, over the years, people have increasingly experienced the negative aspects rather than enjoying a healthy mental state.

Mental health challenges are like chameleons which take different shapes and forms in how they are expressed. Therefore, in identifying the ones as pertains to students, it will be examined under three categories which include: anxiety, depression, and burnout.

Anxiety is one of the major forms of mental health challenges faced by students in contemporary society. From thinking about how to pay tuition fees, to paying dues, and buying compulsory textbooks, and also striving to meet up with certain standard of academic performance, fear of failure, test and exam anxiety as well as constant worry about different aspects of life etc. If such becomes persistent, it can overwhelm such student and unavoidably affect the grade, concentration, behaviour, and overall well-being of such student.

Depression can be defined as a common, serious mood disorder characterized by persistent sadness, low mood, and a loss of interest in activities. Depression is a silent killer of students learning in such a way that it results in poor attendance to classes or lectures, low self-esteem, withdrawal from peers, family, and classmates, social activities, gross decline in academic performance and also increased risk of entertaining harmful thoughts or behaviours.

Burnout on the other hand is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to stress. For instance, when students are overwhelmed with a lot of assignments, group works, practical, exams, and meeting up with certain expectations without taking a break to rest, they may break down due to illness, feel drained, lose motivation, and become complacent about their academics, hence, making it much more difficult to focus, perform well and be in the right frame of mind and healthy mental state.

It is impossible to discuss the common mental health challenges among students without also identifying what propels the existence of it in the first place.

First and foremost, academic pressures is one of the core reasons for the persistent records on students' mental health. One might not fully understand the gamut of the pressures within the confines of school environment until they find themselves having an experience on it.

Key life events can lead to periods of loneliness and/or mental health

Experiences in childhood sometimes lead to difficulties in subsequent life stages



Childhood abuse
Physical / emotional neglect
Parents with mental health or substance abuse issues
Losing a parent



Loss of connection with partner after birth
Stress due to caring responsibilities
Fertility or pregnancy issues
Loss of workplace connections



Leaving home and living independently
Not starting work, missing social connections



Sustaining intimate relationships
Changes to work routine
Decline in health



Retiring and losing connections
Bereavements
Decline in health



Affecting all life stages

Relationship difficulties

- Breakdown of relationships
- Bereavement
- Domestic violence

Limits on socialising and sociability

- Neighbourhoods with anti-social behaviour
- Lack of transport or amenities
- Limited financial resources



When students are given bulky assignments attached to a strict deadline, preparing for tests or exams they find challenging, haven't paid tuition fees with the fear of being kicked out during examination, and compulsory purchase of textbook with the threat of failure despite the battered by hunger, but left with no choice in order to escape the wrath from not complying had made a lot of them to experience issues with their mental health owing to the fact that they want to make ends meet by meeting up with the expectations of the school and of course having a good grade.

In the process of trying to achieve that, it has a way of affecting their mental health because their minds are not settled.

Aside from academic pressures, social media comparison can also be attributed to what has led to the mental health challenges of students. The growing use of social media which is a byproduct of Information and Communication Technology (I. C. T) has endangered students' mental state in the sense that they always want to keep up with the trends by comparing and modelling themselves after those they look up to in that regard, it comes in form of wanting to use the latest phones i.e iPhone, dressing in a certain way, purchasing expensive items i.e Bone straight, longing to own the latest car which is predominant among the male gender etc. Their cravings for these things have caused a shift from the aim which is academics to unnecessary distractions on wanting to belong and feel socially accepted by people. That is the reason most students out of greed do the unimaginable to get it at all cost. But what if they don't have the means of purchasing it? They can go the miles of fabricating stories to their parents in or-

der to get their cravings. Its implication comes into play when they do not have it, they feel bad, disturbed and left out, hence it will affect their mental state which transcends to their academics.

Furthermore, fear of failure is another cause of mental state challenge encountered by students. It is the joy of every student to have excellent grades, this means that no student loves to fail, even those who eventually did fail wished they had a better result. But there is a point where this fear of failure will drive them to that point and can distort their mental health. For example, students mount excessive pressures on themselves especially when it is close to examination before they start reading their books. At this point, it will result in a distorted mind overloaded with information which they are likely bound to forget a large percentage of it because of lack of early preparations. Students especially in higher institutions engaged in all manner of mechanisms to cover up for the days they didn't read their books, hence they try to jam pack the reading. The most popular of them is tagged "TDB" which stands for 'Till Day Break' which connotes that they start reading from evening to the following morning, some even take coffee, energy drinks, bury their legs in a bucket of water etc. to ensure they do not doze off while reading, which can be narrowed down to their fear of having carry overs or retaking courses as it were.

In addition, lack of support contributes to students' mental health challenge. This can be mostly seen in cases where the student is self-sponsored during the course of their academic journey. Hence, these persons have divided attention allotted to their

job and their academics. In a bid to balance and give attention to both, if the student does not properly manage such with care can risk developing issues in their mental health. Another aspect to this is when a student is asked to pay a particular fee for textbook or other things that require funds, if they don't get a positive response from their parents or sponsors they feel disappointed, and anxiety creeps in, such person will feel uneasy especially when it has an unavoidable consequence attached to it.

What then are the effects of mental health challenges on students' academic performance?

POOR CONCENTRATION ON THEIR ACADEMICS

Due to the issues caused by their unhealthy mental state, it takes a pound of flesh on affecting how they concentrate on their studies which can be tracked to either depression, anxiety or burnout. They find it difficult to actively participate in what matters the most.

POOR GRADES

It is the aftermath of losing concentration as a result of being spiritually, emotionally, socially or financially distracted. It will prevent them from excelling in their academics and produce the better version of themselves. Some students even get to the extent of dropping out when they feel overwhelmed like their world is coming crashing down.

ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism which can also mean 'Chronic absence' will become the norm. For instance, when a student is really affected mentally, and finds it

tedious to cope in class activities, they will begin to skip lectures because they are conscious of the fact that there is nothing they stand to gain because they are not in the right frame of mind.

Irrespective of the forms, causes and effects of mental health issues among students, there are possible solutions that can serve as a way of curtailing such occurrences when adopted. Some of which include:

EXISTENCE OF COUNSELING SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

There should be a platform where trained counsellors should be available to help students express their struggles in a safe space. This is important because it will help in the long run in identifying signs of mental health issues and proffer professional steps on how to cope with such situations.

REDUCED ACADEMIC PRESSURE

Schools are advised to ease excessive workloads, unrealistic expectations and strict deadlines in order for students to express less burnout and anxiety, which will help improve their overall mental state of health.

ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT FROM PARENTS AND TEACHERS

This will help students feel valued, loved and understood, hence making it less tedious to cope with it.

OPEN CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Creating an atmosphere where people can freely discuss mental health which will prevent stigma and encourage students to speak up instead of wallowing in silence.

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

Sports enthusiasts seek improved amenities at Bwari township stadium

Some sports enthusiasts in Bwari Area Council of the FCT, have called for improved amenities at the Bwari Township Stadium, while expressing concerns over the

deteriorating condition of the facility.

The sports enthusiasts, spoke in separate interviews with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Thursday in Bwari,

Abuja, describing the situation as an untapped potential in grassroots sports infrastructure, and called for urgent government intervention to restore the facility and support youth development in the area.

The mini-stadium, actively hosts local league games, including matches for the Nigeria Youth League Cup and the Bwari FA Cup in 2025.

Recalled that the facility was renovated to its present standard in 2023, by the FCT Football Association (FA), as one of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Project.

A section of the football pitch

The renovation included the installation of bucket seats in the stands with a seating capacity of over 3,000 fans and an erected perimeter fence to meet official match standards.

The playing pitch of the facility currently is a little uneven and showed visible patches of worn-out grasses.

It is also observed that an inadequate drainage structure for rain water flow could possibly make it difficult for smooth activities on the field during the rainy season.



BWARI TOWNSHIP STADIUM

Nasarawa State clinches 3rd National Deaf Football Crown as Commissioner receives trophy, awards

Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Nasarawa State, Hon. Kwanta Yakubu, on Tuesday, alongside the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Stephen Iliya Sasetu, Director of Sports, Malam Uba Musa, as well as other top officials of the Ministry, formally received the Champions' trophy and a haul of individual awards won by the State's team who successfully defended its title at the recently concluded 6th edition of the National Deaf Football Tournament held in Jos, Plateau State, from 19th-29th April, 2026.

Speaking at the brief reception in his office, the Commissioner lauded the team's consistency and commitment, saying, "This third title in six editions is not accidental. It reflects sustained investment in our athletes and the unflinching spirit of our deaf football team and administration of Governor Abdullahi Sule for youth and sports development in Nasarawa State.

While congratulating the team for the milestone and making the State proud at the national level, the Commissioner promised to inform the Governor about the development and present series of trophies won by the State's Deaf Football Team to him at the Government House as a way to

boost the morale of the players and their coaches.

The Permanent Secretary echoed the same sentiment, noting that the achievement underscores the State's commitment to engendering equal opportunity to its citizens through sports.

Nasarawa State defeated Kaduna State by 2-0 in the final, becoming the most dominant side of the championship, having also won it in 2014 and 2018 respectively.



NASARAWA LIFT DEAF CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY

Lagos SWAN, Sports stakeholders bid Niyi Oyeleke farewell at Night of Tribute

Leading sports media practitioners, both serving and retired, in the evening of Friday, May 1, 2026, came together to celebrate the life and legacy of Niyi Oyeleke,

former Chairman of the Lagos State chapter of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), at the Media Centre of the National Stadium, Lagos.

Beyond the tributes, the

event organized by Lagos SWAN provided an opportunity to reflect on the impact and enduring legacy of the veteran sports broadcaster, who passed away on Tuesday, March 3, 2026.

Among the speakers at the Night of Tribute was retired Assistant Director of Sports at the Nigeria Television Authority, Lagos Network Centre, Chief Paul Ogazi, who played a key role in inspiring Oyeleke's career in sports broadcasting. Ogazi described the late broadcaster as a passionate and committed professional who gave his all to sports journalism and production as a reporter, presenter, and production manager.



LAGOS STATE SWAN MOURNS NIYI OYELEKE

NFF Appoints Maikaba, Uwejamomere as U20, U17 Head Coaches

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has approved the appointments of experienced tacticians Abdu Maikaba and Ebororitse Uwejamomere as head coaches of the country's U20 and U17 boys' national teams respectively.

The appointments were endorsed by the Executive Committee of the NFF following

recommendations from the Federation's Technical and Development Committee.

Maikaba, who takes charge of the U20 national team, the Flying Eagles, brings a wealth of coaching experience to the role.

The seasoned tactician has previously handled the Golden Eaglets, Nigeria's U17 boys' team, and also served as assis-

tant coach of the Flying Eagles during the tenure of former head coach Paul Aigbogun.

Widely respected for his calm demeanour and tactical discipline, Maikaba has managed several top clubs in the Nigeria Professional Football League, including Enyimba FC, Wikki Tourists FC, Kano Pillars FC and Plateau United FC.

One of the highlights of his coaching career came in 2017 when he guided Akwa United FC to victory in the country's oldest football competition, now known as the President Federation Cup.

Meanwhile, Uwejamomere has been named head coach of the Golden Eaglets, five-time world champions at U17 level.



CAF Readmits Nigeria into top African coaching course convention

Nigeria has officially been readmitted into the CAF A Coaching Convention, paving the way for the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to resume CAF A coaching courses across the country.

The development comes after years of anticipation within the nation's coaching community, with local coaches now set to continue their progression toward obtaining one of the highest coaching qualifications on the continent.

The readmission is regarded as a major boost for football development in Nigeria, par-

ticularly in the area of capacity building and technical education for coaches.

With the restoration of the programme, Nigerian coaches will once again have the opportunity to improve their expertise and align with modern coaching standards recognised by the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

The move is also expected to strengthen grassroots and elite football development in the country as more coaches gain access to advanced training and certification programmes.

Mighty Jets Mata thrash Kada Queens 4-1 in Federation Cup playoff

Mighty Jets Mata of Plateau on Wednesday defeated Kada Queens of Kaduna 4-1 in a women's playoff match of the 2026 President Federation Cup in Abuja.

The match, played at the Area 3 Football Pitch, started on a dramatic note as Kada Queens took the lead just 38 seconds into the game.

Kada Queens captain, Janet Dalyop, scored from about 23 yards to give her side an early advantage.

Mighty Jets Mata responded swiftly, with Favour Philemon capitalising on a defensive error to equalise.

The Plateau-based side sustained pressure and took the lead in the 27th minute when Blessing Swalez scored off an assist from Christlove Chris to make it 2-1.

On resumption of the sec-

ond half, both teams battled for control in midfield, but Mighty Jets Mata extended their lead in the 68th minute through Jemmimah Daniel.

Favour Nicholas sealed the victory in the 83rd minute with the fourth goal.

Speaking after the match, Head Coach of Mighty Jets Mata, Gadus Frank, attributed the victory to thorough preparation and participation in grassroots competitions.

"We performed well and our preparation started from grassroots tournaments, which kept the team in good shape ahead of the Federation Cup.

"We are confident going forward and will wait to see our next opponents. I believe the girls will perform even better.



MIGHTY JETS MATA

The entry of a new football administrative guru: How Amobi Ezeaku is reawakening Rangers International of Enugu

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

Structure, stability, and a bold vision are turning the Flying Antelopes from a nostalgic name into a modern institution.

In Nigerian football, “sleeping giant” has long been used to describe Enugu Rangers. The Flying Antelopes, once the pride of the nation and Africa in the 1970s and 80s, spent decades living on past glory rather than present results.

That changed in 2016 when a young lawyer, Amobi Ezeaku, became Team Manager. Few expected a 20-something barrister to revive a club with such history. Yet under his watch, Rangers ended a 32-year league drought and lifted the NPFL trophy.

Today, Barr. Amobi Ezeaku returned as General Manager and CEO in July 2023. After winning the NPFL title in 2024, Rangers are roaring again. With two games left in the 2025/26 season, a second league title in three years is within their reach.

He made history by creating the club's first-ever women's team under the Flying Antelopes brand — a first in Rangers' 54-year existence. The gamble paid off quickly. In 2026, Rangers Women won the Women's FA Cup in only their second season, beating an established Lagos side in a tense final. The triumph showed that Ezeaku's vision extends beyond the men's game and is opening doors for the next generation of female athletes in the South-East.

What sets Ezeaku apart isn't just trophies, but how he's reshaped the club's culture. He's brought youth, education, and discipline to an ecosystem often driven by sentiment and short-term politics.

While most administrators are still finding their footing at his age, Ezeaku already holds an LL.B, B.L, and an LLM in Law. He went further in 2023, returning from Europe with the UEFA Certificate in Football Management and the FIFA Master in Management, Law and Humanities of Sport — a credential that has shaped executives across the Premier League, La Liga, and Serie A. He's one of the few Nigerians to complete the program, and he brought that expertise straight back to Enugu.

His first spell as Team Manager from 2016 to 2021 was transformative. Rangers broke a 32-year league drought in 2016 and won the AITEO Cup in 2018 after 35 years. More importantly, he built a professional backroom structure where contracts were properly drafted, player welfare improved, and the club began operating with corporate discipline.

Unlike clubs that cycle through coaches every season, Ezeaku has backed Coach Fidelis Ilechukwu since 2024. That continuity has given Rangers rare stability, and with two games to go they remain firmly on course for the title — something few Nigerian clubs manage after a rough patch.

After stepping down in 2021 to pursue further studies, many feared Rangers would slip back into chaos. They



GOVERNOR PETER MBAH AND AMOBI EZEAKU



ENUGU RANGERS FC

did. By 2023, the club needed a reset. It came when Enugu State Governor Dr. Peter Mbah appointed Ezeaku as GM/CEO in August 2023 — a homecoming backed by global training and a clearer vision.

Since his return, Rangers have adopted a modern administrative model. For the first time in the NPFL, the club runs with in-house professionals across legal, media, performance analysis, and medical departments.

The partnership with the Institute of Management and Technology, IMT Enugu, has become a blueprint for innovation. Players now train not

only on the pitch but also in academics, videography, sports medicine, and data analysis. Rangers are no longer just a football club. They're a sports institution, and the model is drawing attention beyond Enugu.

The results on the pitch reinforce the shift. In the 2023/24 season, Rangers claimed their eighth NPFL title, reigniting belief across the state. Now in 2025/26, with two matches remaining, they're in contention for a second title in three years — consistency not seen at the club in over four decades.

Ezeaku's strength lies in merging global best practice with local realities. He understands that Nigerian football

needs structure without losing passion and community identity. That balance earned him a spot in 2023 on FIFA's first independent integrity experts and pro bono counsel panel — a rare recognition for a Nigerian.

At 37, he represents a new generation of administrators who question, learn, and execute instead of accepting the status quo. The dressing room reflects it: players talk of a culture that demands professionalism while making them feel valued and protected.

Fans have felt the change too. The Coal City Stadium is no longer just a venue. It's becoming a fortress again, with organized matchday operations

and stronger fan engagement.

Ezeaku's leadership is a breath of fresh air for Nigerian football. While many clubs still run like personal fiefdoms, Rangers now operate like a limited liability company with clear governance. If they lift the title this season, it won't just be silverware. It will prove that educated, ethical, and young leadership can work in Nigeria's football space.

The arrival of Amobi Ezeaku as a football administrative guru may mark the start of a new chapter — not just for Enugu Rangers, but for the entire NPFL. The sleeping giant isn't just awake. It's being rebuilt to last.

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Rangers are no longer just a football club. They're a sports institution, and the model is drawing attention beyond Enugu.

Sports



NSC inaugurates board of the Nigeria Netball Federation, as sport finally gets organisational legitimacy

The National Sports Commission (NSC), has officially inaugurated the board of the Nigeria Net-

ball Federation (NNF), as the sport gets its long overdue structural foundation and legitimacy in Nigeria.



MALLAM DIKKO SHEHU

Inaugurating the board today Tuesday May 5, 2026, in Abuja, Chairman of the NSC, Mallam Shehu Dikko said that the sport of Netball has the potential to give Nigerian kids the pathway to live their dream and win medals for Nigeria at the global stage.

The Chairman, who described the Netball board as the most corporately aligned Sport Federation in Nigeria urged the new board to grow the sport from bottom to the top.

"The potential of this sport is huge and I have no doubt that with the calibre of personali-

ties I am seeing on this board, Nigeria has what it takes to be very competitive at the global stage in no distant time".

"I am even happier to see that this board has set a new benchmark in terms of governance structure, coming up with a clear constitution and a five-year strategic plan, and it is highly commendable".

The Director General of the NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade, who described the inauguration of the NNF board as historic, echoed how Netball has the potential to be one of Nigeria's guaranteed podium sports.



STEPHEN PETER

Coach decries poor infrastructure in grassroots volleyball

A volleyball coach, Stephen Peter, has urged government and stakeholders to support grassroots volleyball development in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Peter, a retired Deputy Superintendent of Police and coach of NY Spikers, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Wednesday that poor infrastructure and inadequate funding were hindering the growth of young players.

"We urgently need intervention. Talents abound here, but without facilities, their potential may never be realised," he said.

He identified the incomplete female court as a major challenge, estimating that it would cost between N8 million and

N9 million to complete.

"Our female court is a priority. Without it, training remains difficult, especially for our girls who deserve equal opportunities," Peter said.

He added that the high cost of volleyballs and other equipment had placed a financial burden on the club, which relies on personal funding.

"A single ball costs about N150,000. We fund everything ourselves because we have no sponsors," he said.

Peter said the club also struggled to provide jerseys, footwear and kits for teenage players, noting that this affected their morale and performance.

Ebinga, Brown win bronze as Team Nigeria impresses in Africa Aquatics Championships

The Nigeria Aquatics Federation (NAqF) has commended Team Nigeria for its performance at the ongoing 17th Africa Aquatics Championships in Oran, Algeria.

The federation gave the commendation in a statement on Wednesday by its Head of Media and Communications, Arinzechi Chukwunonso.

Chukwunonso said that the team had recorded podium finishes and qualified for key finals at the championships.

He said that Team Nigeria opened its medal account on the first day, with Collins Ebinga winning a bronze medal in the men's 100m butterfly in a personal best time of 50.68 seconds.

He added that India Kate Brown also secured a bronze medal to boost Nigeria's early medal tally.

According to him, the team maintained a strong presence on Day 2, with Ebinga qualifying for the final of the 50m butterfly, while Dorcas Oka advanced to the final of the 100m breaststroke.

He said that Ebinga eventually finished fourth in the 50m butterfly final, narrowly missing the podium, while Oka also placed outside the medal positions in the 100m breaststroke final.

"In spite of this, their qualification for the finals reflects Nigeria's growing competitiveness at the continental level," he said.

Chukwunonso commended the athletes for their resilience, discipline and commitment.

"These performances demon-

strate progress, with podium finishes, personal bests and multiple final appearances indicating a positive trajectory for Nigerian aquatics.

"Team Nigeria remains focused as the championships continue, with more events ahead and medal prospects in view.

"The federation reaffirms its commitment to supporting athletes and promoting aquatic sports in Nigeria and across Africa," he said.



TEAM NIGERIA WIN BRONZE AT AFRICA AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIP

Armrestling: We'll continue to win medals in international competitions —Olatunji

The President of the Nigeria Armrestling Federation (NAWF), Samuel Olatunji, said the federation will continue to win more medals for Nigeria in all international competitions.

Olatunji said that he was proud that Nigeria finished third overall with a remarkable medal haul.



SAMUEL OLATUNJI (MIDDLE)

He praised the athletes saying that they were determined to make the country proud in the championship.

"This is a very remarkable performance from the athletes," adding that the federation will continue to support them to do their best in the competitions.

According to the President,

Armrestling Federation is the first sport to qualify for the All Africa Games scheduled for Cairo, Egypt in 2027.

"This is a good result, but we must remain focused. Accra was about qualification—now the real work begins as we prepare for Cairo. We must aim higher.

"We have now qualified to represent the country in the All Africa Games in Egypt. Next time we will win more medals than this.

"As a federation, we will continue to make our armrestlers fit for their competitions," he said.

The President said the Special Assistant to the President on Grassroots Sports Development, Adeyinka Adeboye, has also praised Team Nigeria for a resilient and impressive outing in Accra, Ghana.

"The aide commended the athletes for their determination and fighting spirit. I am proud of our athletes.

Rugby Federation lists gains of grassroots investment

Nigeria Rugby Football Federation says sustained grassroots programmes and investment are expanding rugby participation across the country.

Its General Manager, Azeez Ladipo, disclosed this yesterday in Lagos during an interview with sports journalists.

He said the federation remained committed to introducing rugby to young people through schools and community programmes.

"Our focus is taking rugby to schools and communities where young people can easily learn and enjoy the game," he said.

He said the programmes were designed to keep rugby simple, safe and attractive to beginners, especially students

unfamiliar with the sport.

"We make the game easy to understand so young players enjoy it and stay committed," Ladipo said.

He said inter-school competitions, coaching clinics and teacher training were helping to increase interest and improve understanding of rugby.

"We work closely with grassroots coaches to ensure players learn the right techniques from the beginning," he said.

Ladipo said talent identification remained central, with federation officials visiting schools and communities to discover promising young players.

"Once we discover young talents, we continue supporting their development and progression," he said.



NIGERIA RUGBY GRASSROOTS

Dembele fires PSG into second consecutive Champions League final



OUSMANE DEMBELE

Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday qualified for the UEFA Champions League final after a 1-1 draw with Bayern Munich.

The result saw the French side advance 6-5 on aggregate, reaching the final for the second consecutive time.

PSG, the defending champions, took an early lead in the third minute through Ous-

mane Dembele, who converted a cutback pass from Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

Bayern Munich dominated possession for much of the game, but PSG's defence remained resolute to limit clear scoring opportunities.

Harry Kane equalised for the German side in stoppage time, but the goal came too late to change the outcome of the tie.



Beyond the Headlines

With

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That The People May Know

Xenophobia in South Africa and the questions Nigeria must confront

In recent weeks, disturbing reports have emerged from South Africa about renewed protests targeting foreign nationals, particularly Nigerians. Demonstrations in cities such as Johannesburg and Pretoria have once again revived the spectre of xenophobia, with protesters blaming immigrants for unemployment, crime, and economic hardship.

For many Nigerians living in South Africa, the situation has become increasingly precarious. Some have reportedly closed their businesses or restricted their movements for fear of attack, while others have requested evacuation by the Nigerian government as tensions escalate.

Although the South African government has officially condemned xenophobic violence, the persistence of these protests reveals a deeper societal problem that cannot be ignored. While crime should be confronted wherever it occurs, collective blame against an entire nationality is unjust and dangerous. Unfortunately, the recurring hostility towards Nigerians abroad also compels us to reflect critically on the circumstances that have pushed so many Nigerians to seek refuge outside their homeland.

To fully grasp the gravity of the current situation, it is important to understand that xenophobia against foreign nationals in South Africa is not a new phenomenon. Since the end of apartheid, the country has periodically experienced violent attacks against immigrants from other African nations, including Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Somalia. Some of the worst incidents occurred in 2008, when more than sixty people were killed in anti-foreigner violence, followed by further attacks in 2015 and 2019.

These periodic outbreaks of violence reveal a troubling pattern. Whenever economic hardship intensifies, migrants often become convenient scapegoats for the frustrations of the local population. In many South African townships where unemployment is rampant, foreign traders are frequently accused of "stealing jobs" or dominating informal markets.

The resentment is further fuelled by rumours and misinformation suggesting that foreigners are responsible for rising crime rates or social instability. Such narratives, whether accurate or exaggerated, create fertile ground for mob action.

Nigeria played a crucial role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. During the dark years of racial segregation, Nigeria was among the most vocal and generous supporters of the anti-apartheid movement. Successive Nigerian governments contributed financially to the liberation struggle, provided scholarships for South African students, and mobilised international



XENOPHOBIA PROTESTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

opinion against the apartheid regime.

Many Nigerians still remember how their country imposed sanctions on companies that supported apartheid and rallied other African states to isolate the regime diplomatically. For this reason, the recurring attacks on Nigerians in South Africa are often perceived as a painful betrayal of historical solidarity.

However, while history provides context, it does not fully explain the present tensions. The real issue lies in the socio-economic pressures currently confronting South Africa itself. Despite being one of Africa's most industrialised economies, South Africa struggles with extremely high unemployment, particularly among young people. Inequality remains among the highest in the world, and many citizens feel excluded from economic opportunities decades after the end of apartheid.

Foreign traders are often accused of undercutting local businesses, while undocumented migrants are blamed for placing pressure on housing, healthcare, and social services. Whether these accusations are justified or not, they contribute to a climate of suspicion that periodically erupts into violence.

But beyond South Africa's domestic challenges lies another uncomfortable truth: Nigeria's internal failures are also part of the story.

One of the most tragic commentaries on contemporary Nigeria is the scale at which its citizens are fleeing the country in search of better opportunities abroad. From airports to desert routes and perilous sea crossings, thousands of Nigerians continue to risk everything to escape a nation that has increasingly failed to provide economic security or social stability.

This mass migration is not merely about the pursuit of greener pastures; it is also a powerful indictment of Ni-

geria's governance failures.

For decades, Nigeria has been endowed with enormous natural resources, yet the benefits of these resources have rarely reached the majority of its citizens. Instead, corruption has steadily eroded public institutions and diverted wealth meant for national development into private pockets.

Funds intended for hospitals, schools, roads, and infrastructure have often been misappropriated. The result is a nation rich in resources but poor in public services.

Leadership failure compounds this problem. Many Nigerians have grown deeply frustrated with a political class that appears more interested in personal enrichment than in national development. Policies are frequently implemented without long-term planning, while institutions that should safeguard accountability are weakened by political interference.

For the average Nigerian, survival often depends more on personal resilience than on any support from the state. Consequently, when opportunities arise abroad, many young Nigerians seize them eagerly.

Unemployment, particularly among young people, has reached alarming levels. With a population exceeding 200 million and a demographic structure dominated by youth, Nigeria faces immense pressure to create jobs. Unfortunately, the economy has struggled to absorb this growing labour force.

Even graduates with impressive qualifications frequently find themselves unemployed or trapped in precarious informal work. This frustration fuels the now-popular slogan "Japa," a Yoruba expression that symbolises the desire to escape from Nigeria in search of better prospects.

Security concerns further intensify this migration. From insurgency in the

North-East to banditry in the North-West and kidnapping in many parts of the country, insecurity has become a pervasive feature of Nigerian life. Citizens are not only fleeing poverty but also escaping the constant threat of violence.

Healthcare is another factor driving the exodus. Public hospitals are underfunded, medical personnel frequently embark on strikes, and many political leaders prefer medical tourism abroad rather than investing in domestic healthcare systems. When a nation's leaders seek treatment overseas while its citizens struggle with dilapidated hospitals at home, the message is unmistakable.

The cumulative result of corruption, unemployment, insecurity, and institutional decay is a society where hope appears increasingly elusive. Consequently, Nigerians continue to migrate to other countries including South Africa in search of dignity and opportunity. Ironically, this migration then fuels resentment in host countries, where locals perceive immigrants as competitors for limited resources.

If xenophobic violence escalates in South Africa and Nigerians are forced to return home abruptly, Nigeria may face a humanitarian and economic crisis. The country is already grappling with a massive housing deficit, overstretched infrastructure, and a fragile labour market.

An influx of returnees could exacerbate unemployment, intensify urban congestion, and increase social tensions. Crime rates might rise as desperate individuals struggle to survive in an economy that offers limited opportunities.

Rather than wishing for mass return migration, Nigeria must focus on addressing the structural failures that have driven its citizens abroad in the first place.

The Nigerian government must continue to engage South African authorities through dialogue rather than confrontation. Strong diplomatic ties between the two nations should be used to ensure the safety of Nigerians while also addressing legitimate concerns about crime and migration. Joint initiatives on policing, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange could help reduce mutual suspicion.

Equally important is the role of Nigerians in the diaspora themselves. Those living abroad must recognise that they serve as informal ambassadors of their country. Their behaviour, achievements, and contributions shape the global perception of Nigeria.

While the vast majority of Nigerians abroad are hardworking professionals—teachers, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, and students, the actions of a few individuals involved in criminal activities can unfortunately damage the reputation of the entire community.

Media narratives also require balance. Stories of Nigerian criminality abroad often dominate headlines, overshadowing the countless Nigerians who contribute positively to their host countries. Highlighting these success stories could help counter harmful stereotypes and foster greater understanding.

Ultimately, the recurring xenophobic tensions in South Africa should serve as a wake-up call for Nigeria. A nation cannot continue to export its citizens in large numbers without confronting the underlying reasons for their departure.

Nigeria must begin the difficult but necessary task of rebuilding its institutions, combating corruption, revitalising its economy, and restoring public trust in governance. Only then can the country transform itself into a place where its citizens choose to stay rather than desperately seeking to leave.

For South Africa, the lesson is equally important. Xenophobia undermines the very ideals of African solidarity that helped end apartheid. The continent's future depends on cooperation, not hostility among its people.

Nigeria and South Africa remain two of Africa's most influential nations. Their relationship should be defined not by suspicion or hostility but by mutual respect and collaboration.

The current tensions must therefore be addressed with wisdom, empathy, and foresight. Nigeria must rebuild itself, South Africa must confront xenophobia, and both nations must remember that Africa's destiny is intertwined.

Only through unity, justice, and responsible leadership can the continent realise its immense potential.

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