

NDLEA nabs octogenarian drug suspects, seizes massive consignments across 6 states

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested two octogenarians, aged 83 and 78, for alleged involvement in illicit drug trafficking in Abia and Ekiti states, as operatives intensified a nationwide crackdown that also led to major seizures across six states.

The arrests and operations were disclosed in a statement issued on Sunday in Abuja by the agency's Director, Media and Advocacy, Mr Femi Babafemi.

Babafemi said the elderly suspects were among several persons apprehended in ongoing operations targeting drug traffickers and dealers across the country.

He explained that the 83-year-old suspect was arrested

on Tuesday, April 28, during a raid at Samek by Powerline area of Aba, Abia State, following credible intelligence linking him to illicit drug activities.

"At the time of his arrest, 700 grams of skunk, a strain of cannabis, packaged in retail sachets were recovered from him.

"The octogenarian claimed he was a professional shoemaker before delving into the illicit

drug trade," Babafemi said.

In a similar operation, NDLEA operatives in Ekiti State arrested a 78-year-old suspect on Thursday, April 30, at his residence located at H22 Owode Street, Ilupeju-Ekiti, where 350 grams of the same psychoactive substance were recovered.

In Oyo State, two women were arrested in connection with the seizure of 1.925 kilograms of Col-

orado, a synthetic strain of cannabis. Babafemi said one of the suspects was apprehended along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway on Wednesday, April 29, while conveying the consignment, while the second suspect was arrested in a follow-up operation at Iwo Road, Ibadan, as she attempted to take delivery of the drugs.

In another operation in Ibadan, a notorious drug deal-

er who had evaded arrest for months was apprehended on Saturday, May 2, alongside his salesman at his residence in the Erumu area of the Oyo State capital.

Babafemi disclosed that two associates of the suspect had earlier been arrested on December 8 and are currently facing prosecution at a Federal

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That The People May Know

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Obi quits ADC over 'Toxic politics'

● As party unveils N100m presidential form ● 2026 primary timetable

ABUJA

Former Anambra State Governor, Mr Peter Obi, has announced his resignation from the African Democratic Congress (ADC), citing deepening internal crises, external interference and what he described as a toxic political environment, even as the party unveiled its 2026 primary election timetable and fixed its presidential nomination form at N100 million.

Obi made his decision known in a statement issued on his be-

half by his media aide, Valentine Obienyem, on Sunday in Abuja.

He described Nigeria's political space as increasingly hostile, marked by intimidation, insecurity and sustained scrutiny of individuals committed to sincere public service. According to him, institutions meant to safeguard citizens now often work against them, while those pursuing genuine leadership face pressure both publicly and privately.

Clarifying the circumstances surrounding his exit, Obi stressed that his decision was not borne out of personal grievances with

party leaders, including former Senate President, Senator David Mark, and former Vice-President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

"Let me state clearly: my decision to leave the ADC is not because our highly respected Chairman, Senator David Mark, treated me badly, nor because my leader and elder brother, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

"It is not as well that any other respected leaders did anything personally wrong to me. I will continue to respect them," he said.

He, however, pointed to persistent internal divisions, legal

disputes and the infiltration of destabilising forces within the party as key factors behind his departure. Obi noted that the situation mirrors the internal challenges he previously encountered in the Labour Party, which he left earlier this year.

It would be recalled that Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the 2023 general election, dumped the party on February 14 before subsequently joining the ADC.

He further decried what he termed a growing societal culture where integrity, humility

and adherence to due process are often misconstrued as weakness rather than strength.

He warned that genuine efforts at nation-building are increasingly undermined by suspicion, exclusion and political manoeuvres driven more by control than service.

Reaffirming his commitment to Nigeria's progress, Obi stressed that the welfare of citizens remains his overriding priority. He identified insecurity, poverty and displacement as urgent national

challenges, insisting that his ambition is not about holding political office but about building a just and equitable society.

Meanwhile, the ADC has released its timetable for the 2026 primary elections and approved nomination fees for aspirants seeking various elective positions, signalling its readiness for the 2027 general elections.

Under the new fee structure, the party fixed the presidential

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MAY DAY CELEBRATION: L-R: Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku; Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice Daniel Okungbowa, and Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa, during the May Day Celebration at Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City. PHOTO: MOSES OBOH.

Residents hail Okpebholo as Charismatic road nears completion

BENIN CITY

Residents of Charismatic Road, off Ekhenwan Road in Benin City, turned out in large numbers on Sunday evening to commend Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, during his inspection of key infrastructure projects across Edo South Senatorial District.

The Charismatic Road project, a critical intervention in the area, is now about 90 percent complete. While the first section has been constructed with reinforced concrete, the remaining stretch has been asphalted.

Drainage infrastructure has also been fully delivered, including two water retention ponds strategically located on either side of the road to address flooding concerns.

Residents, who spoke with

journalists during the governor's visit, expressed satisfaction with the transformation of the once flood-prone area.

Chief Joseph Amadasun, who relocated from Lagos four years ago, said the project had fundamentally changed living conditions in the neighbourhood. He noted that the area was previously notorious for flooding but has remained dry despite recent rainfall.

Drawing a comparison with governance in Lagos, he likened Governor Okpebholo's performance to that of former Lagos State governor, Lateef Jakande.

"I moved from Lagos, and this area used to be a major flood trap. But now, after the recent rains, no water entered anyone's home, and the road

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SERAP, NGE say attacks on journalists weakening accountability, spread misinformation —Pg 3

Economic hardship: Many FCT residents take to cooperate begging —Pg 6

Kenya battles to stop the 'goons and guns' as fears of political violence grow —Pg 9

Alloy Chuwemeka: Government should focus on infrastructure, not club ownership —Pg 11

Edo set for smoother 2026 hajj as govt steps up support —Amirul Hajj

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY

The Amirul Hajj for Edo State's 2026 pilgrimage, HRH Mallam Ali D. Suleyman, has said that the state government's sustained commitment to pilgrims' welfare and proactive interventions in Hajj operations have positioned Edo for a more seamless and successful exercise.

Mallam Ali D. Suleyman, who doubles as the Oghieaga of Iybie, commended the government for

what he described as unprecedented support during the 2025 Hajj, noting that its responsiveness and timely interventions significantly improved the overall experience of Edo pilgrims.

Speaking while presenting the report of the 2025 Hajj exercise to the government, the royal father acknowledged that although some challenges were encountered, many predated the current administration and were effectively mitigated through swift government action.

"Despite the challenges we

met on ground, the Edo State Government was very generous and responsive. Virtually everything required for the exercise was provided, and whenever issues arose, we

reached out and government responded promptly," he said.

He particularly lauded the government for providing transportation for returning pilgrims from Lagos to Benin, describing

it as a landmark intervention.

"For the first time, buses were provided to convey pilgrims from Lagos back to Benin immediately on arrival. This was a major relief that brought comfort and dignity

to our people," he added.

He also praised interventions in feeding arrangements and general welfare support, which he said contributed to a largely successful outing.

Obi quits ADC over 'toxic...'

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nomination form at N100 million, governorship at N50 million, Senate at N20 million and House of Representatives at N10 million. State House of Assembly forms were pegged at N3 million.

The party also introduced concessionary rates aimed at broadening participation, offering a 50 percent discount for youths and a 25 percent discount for women and persons with disabilities.

In a statement issued by the National Publicity Secretary, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, the party urged aspirants to strictly comply with its constitution and the provisions of the Electoral Act.

Abdullahi said the timetable underscores the ADC's commitment to internal democracy, transparency, orderliness and adherence to electoral guidelines.

According to him, the process has already commenced, with the collection of application forms scheduled from April 1 to May 4, 2026, while nomination forms will be sold from May 5 to May 10.

He added that completed forms are to be submitted between May 11 and May 13, with screening of aspirants slated for May 14 and May 15. Screening results will be published on May 17.

He further disclosed that appeals arising from the screening would be entertained between May 18 and May 19, while the final list of cleared aspirants will be released on May 20.

Primary elections for State Houses of Assembly, House of Representatives and Senate seats are scheduled to hold si-

multaneously on May 21, while governorship primaries will take place on May 22.

"The governorship primaries are scheduled for May 22, while the party's presidential primary election will be conducted on May 25," Abdullahi said.

He added that the party's National Executive Committee meeting would hold on May 26, followed by a Special National Convention on May 27.

The ADC urged its members, stakeholders and aspirants to strictly adhere to the timetable as it positions itself to deliver credible, people-focused leadership ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Meanwhile, the ADC said that the coalition remains strong despite the resignation of Mr Peter Obi, the 2023 Labour Party (LP) Presidential Candidate.

The Lagos State ADC Chairman, Mr George Ashiru, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Lagos, while reacting to the Obi's resignation from the coalition.

Recall that many Nigeria's opposition figures, including Obi had adopted ADC as a political platform to challenge the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2027 general elections.

Reacting, Ashiru described Obi's decision as consistent with his political history, noting that the aspirant often reassessed his positions when party consensus does not favour him.

"I think that is typical of Mr Peter Obi's political approach. Once consensus is not reached in a way that favours him, he may keep his options open.

Residents hail Okpebholo as...

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remained dry. This is solid work. I can only compare Okpebholo to Baba Kekere (Chief Lateef Jakande). He is doing very well, and we appreciate his efforts," Amadasun said.

Another resident, Aliyu, who has lived in the area for seven years, described the road's previous state as deplorable, particularly during the rainy season.

He said the intervention had brought significant relief to residents.

"I've lived here for seven years, and this road was always in terrible condition during the rainy season. We thank God for what the governor has done. It's completely different now," he said.

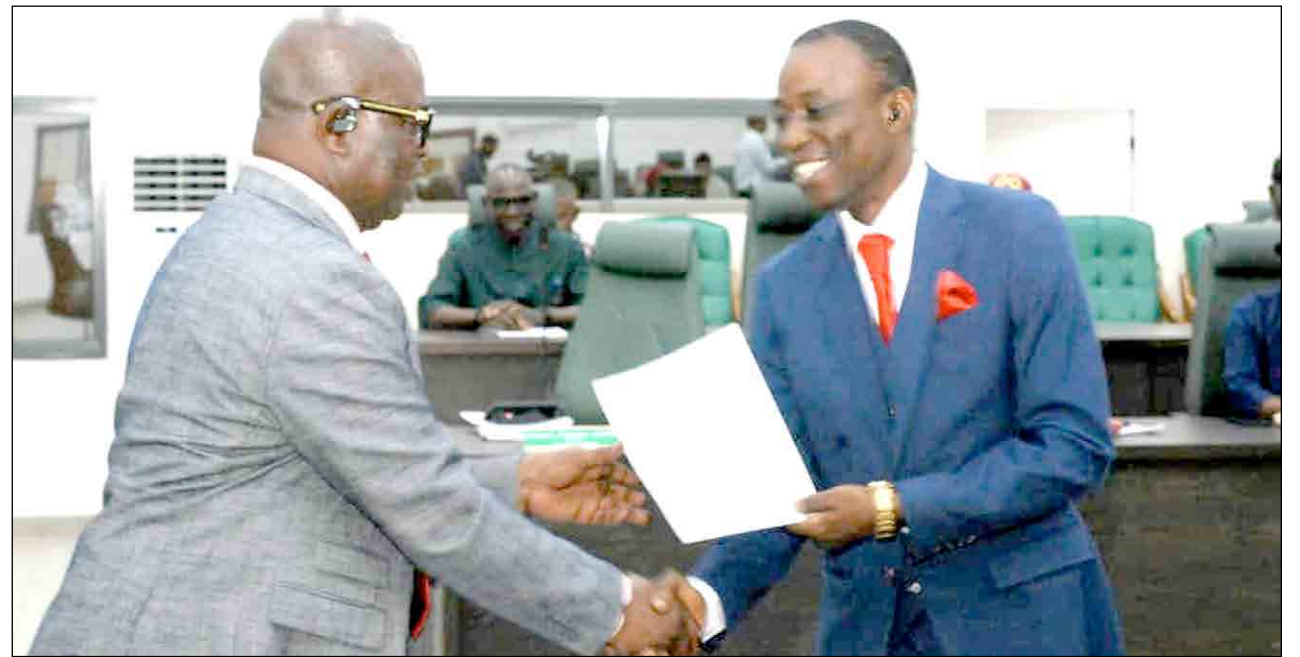
Mrs. Enoch also lauded the project, emphasising the durability of the construction and the elimination of flooding.

"Before, after it rained, you couldn't even walk here. But now, there's no water on the road, and some parts are even concrete, showing how strong it is. We are very grateful to the governor," she said.

As part of the inspection tour, Governor Okpebholo also visited Sapele Road to assess ongoing construction works.

He made a brief stop at the Christ Embassy Camp Ground, where he reviewed the quality of drainage installations.

The inspection forms part of the state government's ongoing efforts to monitor and ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure projects across Edo South.



PRESENTING COMMITTEE'S REPORT:

Majority Leader, Edo State House of Assembly and Chairman, House Standing Committee on Rules, Business and Government House, Hon. Jonathan Ibhama (right), presenting his Committee's report on the screening of Dr Innocent Omogbaifor, nominee for Managing Director, Edo State Geographic Information Service (EdoGIS), to the Clerk of the House, Alhaji Yahaya, for consideration during plenary. PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUN.

Reps race: Lamai picks APC form, pledges purposeful representation

LAMAI CASSIUS

As the All Progressives Congress (APC) nomination process approaches, a leading contender for Etsako Federal Constituency, Chief Richard Lamai, has purchased the party's nomination form to contest for a seat in the House of Representatives.

His move has sparked fresh

excitement across the constituency, with supporters describing it as a clear demonstration of readiness to serve and represent the people at the National Assembly.

Speaking shortly after obtaining the form, Lamai pledged to provide quality service delivery, purposeful and courageous representation, stressing that leadership is about serving the people.

He thanked APC leaders in Etsako Federal Constituency for their support so far and appealed to party faithful to back his aspiration during the nomination process.

"This is the time the constituency needs someone who can speak on the floor of the House, contribute to lawmaking that benefits the common man, attract development, and promote youth and women empowerment," he said.

Some party leaders said Lamai's aspiration offers Etsako the opportunity to regain a stronger and more visible voice at the National Assembly.

They noted that his growing popularity stems from his grassroots connection, accessibility and understanding of the people's needs, adding that his candidacy could boost youth empowerment, constituency projects, infrastructure development and access to federal opportunities.

Tax reforms slash costs, speed up dispute desolution —Ombud

LAGOS

The Chief Executive Officer of the Office of the Tax Ombud, Dr John Nwabueze, says ongoing tax reforms are creating a faster, cost-free and accessible pathway for resolving disputes without resorting to litigation.

Speaking at an interactive session with business editors in Lagos, Nwabueze said the

ombud office serves as an independent bridge between taxpayers and revenue authorities, easing pressure on courts and tribunals while boosting confidence in the tax system.

"Before now, dispute resolution processes were often lengthy and costly for taxpayers. The ombud office now serves as a first line of intervention to mediate and reconcile issues between taxpayers

and revenue authorities," he said.

He noted that while the law provides a 14 to 30-day resolution window, timelines often depend on the responsiveness of relevant agencies.

"When a complaint is received, we engage the concerned authority immediately and work within the statutory timeline as much as possible," he said.

Nwabueze said the office offers

a free platform for complaints and redress, with plans to expand nationwide through regional structures, a toll-free call centre and digital platforms, including a soon-to-be-launched website.

"The call centre will be toll-free, and taxpayers will be able to file complaints without incurring any charges. Even those without internet access can reach us through phone calls," he said.

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High Court in Ibadan.

"At the time of his arrest, 3,085 kilograms of skunk and a Toyota Camry car marked EPE 299 JZ were recovered from him," he added.

Beyond arrests, NDLEA operatives also recorded significant seizures of illicit substances across Lagos, Borno, Kaduna, Jigawa, Edo and Osun states.

In Osun, a 65-year-old driver was arrested on Thursday, April 30, at Ile-Ife toll gate along the Ibadan-Ilesha Expressway with a carton containing seven kilograms of skunk and 15 grams of methamphetamine concealed

in his vehicle with registration number LES 114 AG.

A follow-up operation in Ilesha led to the arrest of the actual owner of the consignment.

In Borno State, a 27-year-old suspect was arrested on Wednesday, April 29, along the Damaturu-Maiduguri road, leading to the seizure of 76,440 pills of Tramadol 225mg.

In a separate operation, another truck driver was intercepted with 14,000 capsules of Tramadol, while a follow-up operation in Biu resulted in the arrest of the owner.

In Kaduna State, NDLEA officers on patrol along the Abuja-Jos highway intercepted a Honda Ridgeline vehicle

marked KSF 65 EQ, leading to the recovery of 393 blocks of compressed skunk weighing 290 kilograms from two suspects on Saturday, May 2.

Similarly, in Jigawa State, no fewer than 49,800 capsules of Tramadol were seized from two suspects along Bauchi Road, Hadejia, on Friday, May 1.

In Lagos State, operatives raided Awolowo Market, Mushin, on Saturday, May 2, recovering a staggering 740 kilograms of skunk.

Meanwhile, an intelligence-led operation in Idogbo community, Benin City, Edo State, on Thursday, April 30, led to the arrest of a suspect in possession of assorted illicit

drugs, including 57 grams of Loud, three grams of Colorado, eight grams of Tramadol, three grams of Swinol and five grams of methamphetamine.

Babafemi quoted NDLEA Chairman, Buba Marwa, as commending officers and men of the agency's commands in Borno, Kaduna, Jigawa, Oyo, Osun and Lagos for their efforts in drug supply reduction.

Marwa noted that the enforcement operations were being effectively balanced with ongoing War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) sensitisation campaigns across schools, worship centres, workplaces and communities nationwide.

NEWS

Ex-Oyo AG, Abimbola, outlines safeguards against state police abuse

IBADAN

Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Mr Oluseun Abimbola, at the weekend, analysed constitutional processes and safeguards needed to prevent state police abuse.

Abimbola, a former Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in Oyo State, gave the analysis in an interview with newsmen in Ibadan.

He cautioned that the decentralisation of the Nigeria Police Force required careful constitutional amendments and groundwork to avoid it breaching the 1999 Constitution.

According to him, the debate on state police is not about desirability alone; it is also about structure, safeguards, standards and constitutional discipline.

He said Section 214(1) of the Constitution already established one Nigeria Police Force

for the entire federation, expressly prohibiting the creation of any other police force by any level of government.

"There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section, no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof," Abimbola quoted the section.

He said the Supreme Court reinforced this in Attorney-General of Abia v. Attorney-General of the Federation (2002), when it emphasised federal supremacy over matters in the Exclusive Legislative List, including policing.

Abimbola, also a partner at Prime Solicitors, Nigeria, said that for state police to be, the Constitution must first be amended under Section 9.

This, he said, required the approval of two-thirds of the National Assembly (NASS), at

least 24 State Houses of Assembly and a presidential assent.

"The process is on from news reports, and we have seen the effort of the Inspector-General of Police to suggest a blueprint to the NASS in their deliberations," he said.

The SAN added that this would ensure that the instruments passed would create a professional body and address the concerns of some commentators on the possibility of abuse.

He added that even after that, the states would still not immediately begin arrests and prosecutions.

"The states must enact enabling laws by the Houses of Assembly, set up command structures, recruit, train, and equip personnel; a process that may take several months to a few years, not instantly," he said.

The former AG acknowledged the fear of political misuse, given Nigeria's history of executive overreach.

To safeguard against the

envisaged abuse, he called for the operational independence of State Police Commissioners with security of tenure.

He said there must be structures to prevent state police commissioners from being removed at will by governors and to insulate the State Police Service Commission's oversight functions from executive control.

"There must also be strict compliance with fundamental rights in Sections 34, 35, and 36 of the Constitution.

"Another safeguard is the need for a coordinating national policing council to establish standards, lest different states create a police force coloured in religion, ethnicity, cultural biases and balloon human rights infringements and liability for unlawful arrests," he said.

On conflicts with the federal police, Abimbola said the Constitution should expressly and unambiguously delineate the boundaries of jurisdiction between both forces.

He maintained that federal law would, in all likelihood, retain overriding authority in national security, terrorism, and interstate crimes, which is desirable.

Abimbola cited the Supreme Court in *N.I.W.A. v. L.S.W.A.* (2024) to support the likelihood nature of the national overriding state laws.

He said the Supreme Court held that, by the doctrine of covering the field, the NASS-enacted law shall prevail where there is an inconsistency with a state law.

According to him, the states cannot currently arm any police

force, since policing is exclusively federal, thus limiting outfits like Amotekun and Hisbah.

He insisted that the creation of state police should not stop federal control on arms regulation, standards and operational protocols.

He noted that the parameters for licensing arms for state police forces should be clear, and operational protocols should be unambiguous.

This, he said, would avoid 36 different policing standards that could undermine professionalism and complicate interstate law enforcement.

ACF dismisses claims of leadership change, affirms stability

KADUNA

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) has debunked reports alleging a change in its leadership, describing the claim as false, unconstitutional and of no effect.

In a statement issued on Sunday by the National Publicity Secretary of the Forum, Prof. Tanko Muhammad Baba, it said the purported leadership change did not emanate from any recognised organ of the organisation.

Muhammad Baba stated that the Chairman of ACF, Mike Mamman Mike Osuman, authorised the release to clarify the situation and reassure members, the media and the general public.

"The attention of the Forum has been drawn to an announcement of a change in its leadership. The news is totally false and the purported action is unconstitutional," he said.

He emphasised that the leadership of the Forum neither authorised nor had knowledge of

the alleged development, urging the public to disregard the announcement entirely.

The spokesman explained that, in line with the ACF Constitution, only the General Assembly has the authority to approve or effect leadership changes, noting that no such meeting had been convened.

He further clarified that the Board of Trustees (BOT) is limited to providing advisory roles on the Forum's aims and objectives and does not possess the power to initiate or enforce leadership changes.

Muhammad Baba also dismissed claims surrounding the establishment of a Constitution Review Committee and a Leadership Selection Committee, describing them as unconstitutional and unknown to the Forum's governing laws.

According to him, the Leadership Selection Committee is an ad hoc body constituted by the National Executive Committee (NEC) and had completed its assignment in 2023, after which it was dissolved.

**A JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE:**

Mr Gabriel Akinadewo, representative of Mr Onuoha Ukeh, Secretary, Nigeria Guild of Editors (left), and Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project Deputy Director, Mr Kolawole Oluwadare, at a joint news conference in Ikeja on Sunday.

SERAP, NGE say attacks on journalists weakening accountability, spread misinformation

LAGOS

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) have urged the Federal Government to ensure more press freedom and adequate protection of journalists.

The groups made the call at a joint news conference in Ikeja to mark the World Press Freedom Day celebrated annually on May 3.

The joint news conference was addressed by SERAP's Deputy Director, Mr Kolawole Oluwadare, and NGE Secretary, Mr Onuoha Ukeh, who was represented by Mr Gabriel Akinadewo.

The conference was entitled: "Role of the Media in Promoting People's Rights, Accountability and Access to Justice in

the Context of Growing Insecurity in Nigeria."

SERAP and NGE emphasised that protecting journalists and safeguarding information integrity were central drivers of peace, security and democratic stability.

According to them, any credible peace promotion or security strategy in Nigeria must integrate support for free, independent and pluralistic media, alongside humanitarian, institutional and economic responses.

The groups expressed concerns about the scale and persistence of killings, abductions, sexual violence, forced displacement and destruction of property in some parts of Nigeria, including Benue, Borno, Kwara, Plateau and Sokoto states.

They said that thousands had reportedly been killed and mil-

lions displaced, with rural communities repeatedly targeted and women and children bearing the brunt of the violence.

They urged the federal and state governments to prevent foreseeable harm, protect communities, investigate rights violations, prosecute perpetrators and their sponsors and ensure access to justice for victims.

They added that the violations constituted breaches of the country's obligations under the constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

"The humanitarian consequences remain severe; communities destroyed, livelihoods lost and victims left without effective remedies," they said.

They noted that Nigerian

authorities had obligations to protect journalists and end insecurity, urging the authorities to exercise due diligence in preventing and addressing violations.

The SERAP and NGE said the UNESCO theme for 2026 World Press Freedom – "Shaping a Future of Peace" – showed that a free and independent media was central to peace and development.

They said that the erosion of independent journalism and civic information ecosystems directly contributed to governance breakdown, adding that attacks on journalists fuelled corruption, weakened accountability and spread misinformation.

The groups recalled that Sections 22 and 39 of the Nigerian Constitution mandated media accountability and guaranteed freedom of expression.

PVC: Oti begins grassroots mobilisation in Abia

NSULU (ABIA)

Governor Alex Otti of Abia has urged residents of communities across the state to obtain their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) during the forthcoming voter registration by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Otti made the call at the weekend during the commencement of a statewide grassroots community engagement programme, at the Agburuke Community Primary School, in Nsulu, Isiala Ngwa North Local Government Area.

The governor, represented by his Chief of Staff, Dr Caleb Ajagba, said that the PVC registration scheduled from May through August, would enable citizens to fully exercise their civic rights.

"There is another window opening from May 4 through August for PVC registration.

"While it is commendable

that people are expressing support for us, it is important that they are fully empowered to exercise their civic rights," he said.

Otti said that the community engagement initiative was part of deliberate efforts by his administration to deepen grassroots inclusion and assess the impact of government policies directly from residents.

According to him, the exercise would enable government officials interface with communities and obtain firsthand feedback on ongoing projects and programmes across the state.

Otti said that his administration had redefined governance through inclusive policies and people-oriented development initiatives reaching communities across Abia.

He expressed satisfaction with testimonies from residents, who acknowledged visible infrastructure projects and improvements in their communities under the present administration.

Two men die after machete clash in Cross River

CALABAR

Two middle-aged men have died following a violent machete fight

in Akpap-Okoyong community in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River, where the victims, identified as Edet and Effiong, reportedly

attacked each other during a heated confrontation.

An eyewitness, Ettenma, said the altercation began when Effiong stormed Edet's residence with a machete, accusing him of stealing a bunch of plantain from his farm. According to the witness, Effiong had earlier discovered the missing produce and was informed by a passerby that Edet was seen coming from

the direction of the farm with a bunch of plantain.

"The confrontation quickly escalated into a fight," Ettenma said. "Effiong, in anger, used the machete he was holding to attack Edet. In response, Edet grabbed another machete nearby and retaliated. Before anyone could intervene, both men had inflicted severe injuries on each other."

The victims were rushed to the Akpap-Okoyong Health Centre, but inadequate medical facilities and lack of essential supplies reportedly hindered effective treatment.

"They could not receive proper medical attention due to the severity of their injuries and the limited capacity of the health centre. Both men eventually died from excessive

blood loss," the source added.

The incident has thrown the community into mourning.

When contacted, the spokesperson of the Cross River State Police Command, ASP Akata, confirmed that investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances surrounding the incident and why no immediate intervention prevented the fatal clash.

APC elders in Esan S'East reject 'third-term agenda'

● Urge Okpebholo's intervention

BENIN CITY

A group of elders under the aegis of Concerned APC Leaders of Esan South-East Local Government Area has rejected what it described as a looming third-term bid by a member of the Edo State House of Assembly, warning that such a move could undermine party cohesion and political stability in the area.

At a press conference in Benin City, the group condemned the political developments which it said were "inimical to the growth of the APC and the Esan South-East geopolitical zone," specifically opposing the alleged ambition of Hon. Sunny Ojizele, who represents the constituency in the State Assembly.

Spokespersons for the group Hon. Okoinemen Ebhohimhen Festus described the third-term push as "alien to the politics of Esan land," likening it to an "Ebola" and a "taboo" that must be resisted.

Hon Ebhohimhen, an APC stakeholder from the LGA, said: "We say no to the imposition of Hon. Sunny Ojizele on our people. The third-term agenda is not acceptable to us. It negates fairness, equity, and

the rotational principle that has sustained peace in Esan land."

He called on the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, to intervene urgently to avert possible breakdown of party unity.

"We appeal to the governor to look into this matter and create an enabling environment for political harmony, peace, and a credible electioneering process ahead of the primaries in a few weeks. Let the people freely choose those who will fly the party's flag," he said.

Ebhohimhen commended the resilience of the people of Esan South-East "in the face of attempts to entrench exclusion and non-participatory politics," stressing that broader inclusion would promote development across the local government area.

"It is imperative to allow others to participate. Inclusion spreads development across all wards and communities. No single individual should hold the zone to ransom," he added.

Also speaking, another stakeholder, Mr Joseph Olumese, described the alleged third-term ambition as "an aberration" and an attempt to shut out other qualified aspirants.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Chairman, Yagba West LGA in Kogi/Chairman, Association of Local Government of Nigeria, Kogi State Chapter, Mr Olokun Tosin; Chairman, Mopamuro LGA, Kogi State, Mr Ademola Bello; member representing Yagba East/Yagba West/Mopamuro Federal Constituency in Kogi, Leke Abejide, and Chairman, Yagba East, LGA, Dr Joshua Monday, during a news conference announcing Abejide's resignation from African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Abuja at the weekend.

Ibhamawu secures APC endorsement for 2027 Edo Assembly poll

KEN ABU

EKPOMA

The Majority Leader of the Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Jonathan Ibhamawu, has been endorsed as the sole candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for the 2027 Edo House of Assembly election in Esan West Constituency.

Hon. Ibhamawu disclosed this on Thursday at a rally in Ekpoma, the administrative headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area, where party leaders and supporters gathered to affirm the endorsement.

He expressed appreciation to APC leaders in the local government for the confidence reposed in him, describing the endorsement as a validation of his performance during his first term in office.

According to him, the decision to adopt him as the sole candidate was reached by the Esan West party leadership during a meeting held on December 26, 2025.

"I am grateful to the leaders and members of our great party for finding me worthy to continue serving our people.

"This endorsement is a true

testament to the mandate given to me by my constituents and a call to do even more," he said.

The majority leader said his motivation to seek re-election was borne out of his commitment to improve the welfare of his constituents and to address key challenges in the constituency.

He also reiterated his resolve to contribute to the revival of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, which he alleged suffered setbacks under the immediate past administration of ex-governor, Obaseki.

The lawmaker said he and some of his colleagues jointly resisted what he described as attempts by the previous administration to legitimise an "illegitimate" governing body for the institution through backdated appointments.

He added that the Assembly also opposed plans to relocate some departments of the university to another location.

Highlighting his achievements, Ibhamawu listed projects executed across the ten wards of the LGA to include the provision of boreholes and electricity in Ward 1, and a free eye care outreach in Ward 2 where beneficiaries received surgeries and eye-glasses.

BETTY IDIALU

WARRI

Policemen from the Orkpe Division in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State, have allegedly shot an unarmed man in Okudjere-Ovu Community over suspicion of possessing hard drugs.

The incident occurred at a

time when many Nigerians are still grappling with the painful memories of the gruesome killing of Oghenemine Ogidi.

It was gathered that the officers, working alongside anti-cult operatives had on Thursday stopped the victim on the allegation that he was carrying illicit substances before allegedly shooting him in the right leg.

Eyewitnesses said the policemen fled the scene immediately after the incident, reportedly out of fear of a possible backlash from aggrieved youths in the community, leaving residents to provide assistance to the injured victim.

Meanwhile, a civil society group, Initiative For Social Rights Concerns And Advancements (ISRCA),

also known as "No Justice, No Peace," has strongly condemned the shooting, describing it as unacceptable.

The group called on the Delta State Commissioner of Police, CP Yemi Oyeniyi, to urgently investigate the matter and identify the officers involved in what it described as "unfortunate and unprofessional conduct."

Navy cracks down on oil thieves, militants in N/Delta

ABUJA

The Nigerian Navy has intensified its crackdown on crude oil theft and maritime crimes, destroying illegal refining sites and dismantling militant hideouts across Rivers, Bayelsa and Cross River states.

This is contained in separate statements issued by the Director of Naval Information, Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, on Saturday in Abuja.

Folorunsho said personnel of the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) PATHFINDER, acting on credible intelligence, uncovered and dismantled five illegal refining sites in the Ahoada West Council Area of Rivers.

He said the sites, located around Egboama-Ogbogolo community, contained about 15 dug-out pits and reservoirs with an estimated 85,000 litres of suspected crude oil and 78,000 litres of illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil.

According to him, the products were sourced from a nearby wellhead, while the illegal infrastructure was subsequently destroyed in line with operational procedures.

He added that personnel of NNS SOROH also intercepted equipment used for illegal pipeline connections near the Soku Gas Plant pipeline corridor in Bayelsa.

Items recovered, he said, included jerrycans, hoses and pipes used for siphoning pe-

troleum products.

"No arrests were made in both operations as suspects fled on sighting naval personnel," he said.

In a related development, Folorunsho said that naval troops, in conjunction with personnel of the Nigerian Army, stormed Dayspring Island along the Calabar-Oron channel in Cross River following increased cases of kidnapping.

He said the operation, led by NNS VICTORY and Forward Operating Base, Ibaka, forced suspected militants to abandon their camps and flee.

The navy spokesman said troops later discovered and destroyed a militant hideout linked to a notorious suspect known as "Juju," who escaped

during the operation.

He added that two boats fitted with outboard engines were recovered, while one suspected informant was arrested and is currently in custody.

According to him, a 13-hour restriction on maritime movement has been imposed in the area to sustain operational gains and curb criminal activities.

Folorunsho said the operations had significantly degraded the capacity of criminal elements, disrupted their logistics networks and restricted their movement within the creeks.

He reaffirmed the Nigerian Navy's commitment to sustaining aggressive operations to secure the maritime domain and protect critical national assets.

NEWS**Why ADC should adopt new party ahead of 2027 —Lawyer****AWKA**

A legal practitioner in Awka, Mr John Okoli-Akirika, has advised the African Democratic

Congress (ADC) to adopt a new political party without encumbrances, if it hopes to meet INEC deadline for party primaries.

Okoli-Akirika, also a public

affairs commentator, gave the advise in an interview with newsmen in Awka, on Sunday.

He spoke against the back-drop of Thursday's Supreme Court judgment that favoured

David Mark-led faction.

He said, "The Supreme Court judgment is not yet Uhuru for ADC. The party should not celebrate.

According to him, ADC still

has other legal battles pending before other courts that could bar it from meeting the INEC deadline.

He said that "while some cases have been concluded, some have just commenced, and others are yet to start.

"Right now, the leadership should look within the coalition or outside for a credible party without encumbrances and adopt it for the purposes of contesting the 2027 General Elections.

"This is in view of the May 30 timeline by INEC for all the parties to conclude their primaries," Okoli-Akirika said.

The Supreme Court had, on Thursday, set aside a "status quo ante bellum" order made in the party's leadership tussle.

The apex court held that the preservative directive could not validly subsist after proceedings had been concluded.

Okoli-Akirika said that the judgment could only take the ADC back to the Federal High Court to continue its case where it stopped before the ante bellum order by the Appeal Court.

He feared that the proceedings might linger, making it difficult for the party to meet the INEC deadline.

**EMPOWERMENT FUND:**

Richard Akinnola, founder of the Widows of Journalists Empowerment Fund (middle) and some of the widows and beneficiaries of the fund in Lagos on Saturday.

Petrol hike: Car owners abandon vehicles, commute by public transportation**ABUJA**

Many car owners in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), now prefer commuting in public vehicles to using their cars due to hike in the pump price of petrol.

Also, low-income earners, who cannot afford the high costs of transportation, walk 'trekkable' distances to work in order to survive the hardship.

It was observed that the ever busy Kubwa express way, Suleja to Mandalla axis, is experiencing low vehicular movements, particularly on weekdays, because many car owners could no longer afford to fuel their cars.

Other major routes in the FCT are also experiencing fewer vehicular traffic.

Before the increase in the pump price of petrol, there used

to be heavy traffic jam on these routes, thereby resulting in slower speeds and longer trip times.

Sholape Kolawole, a public servant and resident of Dutse Alhaji, in an interview with our correspondent on Sunday in Abuja, said she had stopped using her vehicle in months.

She said, "It has been stressful using commercial vehicles, I have no choice since I cannot afford to fuel my car, and my salary is not enough to buy fuel everyday to work.

"To cut cost, I just stopped using the car for now and resolved to taking commercial vehicles to the office and back, which is also expensive but not as much as using my car," she said.

Another car owner, Mr James Obasi, a commercial transporter in Kubwa village, said the situation had been so discouraging that some of his colleagues could

not do business for weeks.

Obasi said the fuel situation had increased at unexpected times thereby impacting on many small businesses negatively.

He called on the Federal Government to make deliberate policy action to end the reoccurring situation.

Another car owner, Mr Emmanuel Ajayi, said he had not been able to buy petrol in his car for months, noting that the situation was really telling on his health, because of the stress of "jumping" from one public transport to another, just to make ends meet.

Ajayi called on the government to act swiftly and bring a lasting solution to the hike in fuel, save Nigerians from the stress and also make it beneficial to everybody.

Dr Aliyu Ilias, a development expert, and customer experience management specialist, said the hardship Nigerians were experiencing was deeply troubling.

Ilias said that Nigerians were

forced to stay at home for several days a week because they could no longer afford transportation to work.

He said the challenge was due to the global oil market disruption caused by geo-political tensions and conflict.

He further said that as an oil-producing nation, Nigeria should ordinarily benefit from rising crude prices.

According to him, reports indicate that oil prices have surged significantly, meaning the government is earning more revenue, yet, ordinary citizens are not feeling the impact of this windfall.

He said since the government was benefiting from increased oil revenues, it should channel part of that windfall into easing the burden on citizens.

"One practical solution will be for the Federal Government to provide crude oil to local refineries at reduced rates, enabling them to refine and sell petrol at more affordable prices.

Army arrests blogger, soldiers over alleged incitement**ABUJA**

The Nigerian Army has arrested blogger, Mark Chidiebere, also known as 'Justice Crack', and several soldiers over alleged incitement and misinformation.

This is contained in a statement at the weekend in Abuja by the Acting Director of Army Public Relations, Col. Appolonia Anele.

Anele said the arrests followed complaints shared by the blogger on social media regarding soldiers' feeding conditions and welfare concerns.

She said preliminary investigations revealed the blogger engaged some soldiers in discussions allegedly aimed at creating discontent within the ranks.

"Some of the exchanges are

considered to border on subversive conduct," Anele said.

She noted that such actions posed serious threats to military discipline and national security.

According to her, the blogger was arrested alongside the soldiers involved to support ongoing investigations.

Anele said the soldiers were being handled under military procedures and regulations.

She added that the blogger had been transferred to civil authorities for further investigation and possible prosecution.

"The Nigerian Army remains committed to the rule of law and due process," she said.

She assured that the Army would continue working with relevant agencies to ensure justice is served.

CISLAC seeks higher tobacco taxes**KATSINA**

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) has urged the Federal Government to raise taxes on tobacco products to reduce consumption nationwide.

CISLAC Executive Director, Auwal Rafsanjani, made the call during a media training in Katsina.

Represented by Programme Manager, Mohammed Murtala, Rafsanjani said tobacco products remained relatively affordable in Nigeria.

He said, "The low cost of tobacco products has contributed significantly to widespread use, especially among low-income households."

Rafsanjani said higher taxes would increase prices and discourage consumption, particularly among vulnerable groups and young people.

He said, "Taxation remains one of the most effective tools for reducing tobacco use."

Rafsanjani said the training aimed to strengthen journalists' capacity, especially women, in tobacco control and public health advocacy.

He expressed concern over

continued smoking in public places despite regulations banning the practice.

He said, "Existing laws must be enforced to protect non-smokers and discourage harmful behaviour."

Rafsanjani urged the media to intensify public education and support stronger enforcement of tobacco control laws.

Earlier, CISLAC Senior Programme Officer, Solomon Adoga, warned about tobacco's economic and health consequences.

He described tobacco as "deadly" and harmful to national health, economic productivity and sustainable development.

Adoga said cigarettes, shisha, smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes all posed severe health risks.

He warned that tobacco use could cause cancers affecting the mouth, throat and bladder.

Citing the World Health Organisation, Adoga said tobacco caused about eight million deaths globally each year.

Participants praised CISLAC for the initiative and pledged stronger reporting on tobacco-related health concerns.

2027: Enugu North zone pledges 100% votes for Tinubu, Mbah**ENUGU**

The Enugu North Senatorial Zone has endorsed President Bola Tinubu and Governor Peter Mbah for second terms in office, pledging 100 per cent votes for them.

The zone which donated N102 million for Mbah's nomination form also cited infrastructure development and increased political inclusion of the zone as reason for the endorsements.

The endorsements were made on Saturday during a mega rally staged at the Nsukka Township Stadium for the reelection of the duo.

Enugu North Senatorial Zone comprises Nsukka, Igbo-Eze

South, Igbo-Eze North, Udenu, Uzo-Uwani and Igbo-Etiti Local Government Areas.

Moving the motion for the endorsement, the member representing Udenu/Igbo-Eze North Federal Constituency, Mr Dennis Agbo, said the zone had witnessed a turnaround under the current administration at the federal level.

Agbo noted that the Federal Government had addressed longstanding concerns of marginalisation by appointing indigenes of the zone into strategic positions, while also initiating projects aimed at improving connectivity and economic growth.

He added that ongoing infrastructure, including inte-

gration into national development frameworks and access to key energy projects, had positioned the state for greater economic opportunities.

According to him, the establishment of regional development initiatives such as the South-East Development Commission signalled a renewed commitment to inclusive growth and regional integration.

"The assembly believes that our interest as a people is anchored on fairness, equity and inclusion. These efforts by the Federal Government require strong support to ensure continuity," he said.

Agbo said the zone resolved to mobilise support for President Tinubu's re-election bid, stressing

that continuity would consolidate the gains already recorded.

Also speaking, the Deputy Speaker of the Enugu State House of Assembly, Mr Ezenta Ezeani, moved a motion endorsing Mbah for a second term.

Ezeani said the endorsement was based on what he described as "visible and measurable achievements" recorded within a short period.

He highlighted key achievements of the Mbah administration to include infrastructural development across urban and rural communities, investments in smart schools, improved security architecture, and economic reforms aimed at attracting investment.

Economic hardship: Many FCT residents take to cooperate

begging

ABUJA

Many Residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), have taken to corporate begging as part of strategies to make ends meet.

The practice is becoming increasingly visible at traffic intersections, offices, and commercial centres.

The people involved are usually well dressed that one finds it somehow to turn them down when they ask for assistance.

A civil servant, Mr Musa Sani, recalled his encounters with a well-dressed individual soliciting for money with emotional stories daily in the Central Business District (CBD).

"They appear organised and persistent. Sometimes they approach aggressively, making it difficult to ignore," he said.

Sani said that the trend was affecting customer experience around his office environment. "Clients feel uncomfortable

when approached repeatedly before even entering the premises," he said.

A trader in Wuse Market, Ms Adaye Gozi, said that some of the beggars move in groups from shop to shop requesting financial support under various pretences.

"They claim to represent organisations or urgent causes, but there is rarely any proof," she said.

Another civil servant, Mrs Lucy Obi, said they beg with confidence and when not given, they become aggressive.

"Some time ago I went to the ATM to withdraw some money, on my way out a lady well dressed approached me asking for money to buy drugs and to feed her baby, which I took pity on her and gave her some money.

"The next week I saw her in my office begging again for medical treatment holding a picture, and I confronted her and she told me to mind my business," she said.

Mr Umar Ilyasu, a taxi driver, said that traffic congestion points have become hotspots for such activities, especially

during peak hours.

"They target motorists stuck in traffic, knocking on windows and insisting on assistance," he said.

A university student, Wale Ibrahim linked the rising trend to economic hardship and unemployment among youths in the city.

"Many of the beggars see it as an easier alternative to job hunting, especially with the rising living costs," he said.

Mrs Umami Ahmed, a resident of Wuse, urged authorities to address the situation before it escalates further.

"There should be awareness and enforcement to distinguish genuine charity from exploitation," she said.

Ahmed said that some of the beggars were criminals, some disguise to beg only to survey the area.

She also advised citizens to be

observant of their areas and call the authorities to inform them of any suspicious movements.

One of the beggars at Wuse market, who claimed anonymity, said that the only business he understood was begging.

"I grew up to see my parents begging for a living and we lived well, they built four houses from begging.

"We joined the business at an early age, and I have acquired

a lot too, but my children are not in this because they are in school, I want begging to end with me," he said.

Hassan Hassan, a little boy who begs as well said that begging was his only chance of eating and his mother depends on him.

"I have five younger siblings, when my father abandoned us, my friends in the area introduced me to this and it has been helping us survive," he said.



GRAND FINALE:

Winners of the NNPC/Seplat Energy JV PEARLs Quiz 2026, Mountain Crest High School, with representatives of Seplat Energy, NNPC, Imo Government and, a traditional ruler after the grand finale in Owerri, on Saturday.

Richard Akinola Foundation supports journalists' widows with N3.8m

LAGOS

The Richard Akinola Foundation has empowered 38 widows of journalists and activists across the country with the sum of N3.8 million.

The Founder of the foundation, Dr Richard Akinola gave out the empowerment fund in Ikeja, as part of the activities to commemorate its 16th anniversary.

The event, which took place at the Airport Hotel, Ikeja, also witnessed the renewal of the annual health insurance for the widows.

Akinola said that some of the widows under the foundation were not in Lagos and bank transfers were being effected for their financial support.

He said the anniversary event was one of the two signature events of the foundation.

The founder said that other efforts of the foundation, which were not usually made public, included assisting the widows in meeting some chal-

lenges like rent, school fees and feeding.

According to him, in 2025, the foundation also gave out BP monitor machines to all the widows, toward ensuring healthy life.

He thanked his friends who had supported the foundation through its journey in the past 16 years.

Akinola, however, said that the foundation needed lots of financial support both from individuals and corporate bodies, as the financial burden of the past 16 years was getting too heavy.

"Giving does not depend on how deep a person's pocket is, but how deep is the person's compassion. Rich people don't give, only caring people do," he said.

The foundation established on April 10, 2010, aims to bring succour to widows and children of journalists and activists due to the precarious nature of the jobs and vocations of journalists and activists respectively.

Bandit attack Kwara PMF camp, kill 3 police officers

ILORIN

The Commissioner of Police in Kwara, Mr Ojo Adekimi, has expressed shock and sorrow over a deadly bandit attack on the Police Mobile Force (PMF) Camp at Tenebo Village in Kaiama Local Government Area of the state

This is contained in a statement issued by the Command's Spokesperson, SP Toun Ejire-Adeyemi, on Saturday in Ilorin.

Ejire-Adeyemi quoted Adekimi as saying that the attack, which occurred in the early hours of Saturday, claimed the lives of three police officers, while several others

sustained serious injuries.

The CP condemned the attack, describing it as heinous and cowardly, and commended the fallen officers for their bravery and sacrifice in the line of duty.

"Their commitment to safeguarding lives and property will never be forgotten," he said.

The CP extended condolences to the families, friends

and colleagues of the deceased, and wished the injured officers speedy recovery.

He assured that the command would deploy all necessary operational and intelligence resources to apprehend those responsible for the attack.

"There will be no hiding place for the perpetrators," he added.

Nigeria summons S/Africa's envoy over protests against foreigners

ABUJA

Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has extended an invitation to the Acting High Commissioner of South Africa for a meeting scheduled to take place today (Monday), May 4, at the Ministry.

The Minister of Foreign Af-

fairs, Amb. Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu disclosed this in a statement issued on Saturday by Kimiebi Ebienna, the ministry's Spokesperson.

According to him, the meeting is to formally convey Nigeria's profound concern regarding recent events that have the potential to impact the cordial relations between Nigeria and

South Africa.

Ebienna said the meeting would primarily focus on the ongoing demonstrations by various groups within South Africa, documented instances of mistreatment of Nigerian citizens and attacks on their businesses.

"The Ministry is aware of the growing discontent among Nigerians concerning the

treatment of their nationals in South Africa.

"Nevertheless, the ministry implores the Nigerian public to remain calm and reiterates the Federal Government's commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of Nigerian citizens residing in South Africa," he quoted the minister as saying.

Quiz competition: NNPC, Seplat reward schools with over N10m in Imo

OWERRI

The NNPC Upstream Investment Management Services (NUIMS) and Seplat Energy Joint Venture has rewarded schools and brilliant students with cash and scholarship awards worth N10.5 million in Imo.

The schools and students received the prizes at the end of the 2026 edition of the Promoting Exceptional and Responsible Leaders (PEARLs) quiz and Steam compe-

tion grand finale in Owerri.

The Seplat PEARLs quiz and Steam competition are annual academic competitions for secondary school students in the company's operational areas, aimed at promoting excellence and raising the quality of education.

Over 200 schools in Imo participated in the year 2026 edition, with Mountain Crest High School emerging overall winner of the quiz competition and receiving a project-based grant of N5 million for school

development and a trophy.

The three students who represented the school received N100,000 each in scholarship grants, while their teacher went home with a laptop.

In the second place was Owerri City Secondary School, which received a project-based grant of N3 million and a trophy, with three students who represented the school receiving N75,000 each as educational support grants, and their teacher receiving a laptop.

Eziachi Secondary School, Orlu, emerged third, receiving a project-based grant of N1 million, with each of the three students receiving N50,000 in educational support grants and their teacher, a laptop.

Christ the King College came fourth in the competition but without any monetary prize although their teacher went home with a laptop in recognition of the school's participation and efforts at the grand finale.

For the Steam Innovation

Project segment, 10 schools showcased innovative and problem-solving projects developed by students, which were assessed on relevance to real-life problems, value addition, technical depth, sustainability and quality of presentation.

PAC College emerged overall winner of the category, receiving a grant of N500,000; St Theresa College came second and received the sum of N250,000 while Urban College secured the third position, re-

ceiving N100,000 to support the development and scale-up of their projects.

All other participating students however, received school bags and exercise books in recognition of their efforts and participation throughout the competition.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS ATIKAMI FAVOUR OMINION**, now wish to be known **MRS. AGBI FAVOUR OMINION**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

NEWS**JUDICIARY**

Falana pushes for reopening of 'unresolved' murder cases, tasks journalists

LAGOS

Rights campaigner and Senior advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Mr Femi Falana, on Saturday called on the media to intensify advo-

cacy for reopening of 'unresolved' murder cases.

Falana made the call at an interactive session and press conference entitled: "The Role of Media in Promoting People's Rights, Accountability and Ac-

cess to Justice in the Context of Growing Insecurity in Nigeria".

The event was organised by the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), in Ikeja.

Falana urged journalists to

use their platforms to demand justice for victims of extrajudicial killings and other abuses, noting that several high-profile cases had been abandoned without accountability.

He said that the media must not allow such cases to be forgotten.

Falana cited instances of killings in Lagos allegedly involving

policemen, saying that some murder cases had not been revisited in spite of public outcry.

He listed cases deserving reopening to include the alleged murder of Master Sylvester Oromoni, a student of Dowen College, Lagos, and the Offa bank robbery of 2018 in Kwara.

He also listed the murder of Kudirat Abiola, the Wife of Chief MKO Abiola, among the cases, as well as the murder of six traders at Owode Onirin Market in Lagos State, in August 2025.

He said that the media should follow-up on rights violation cases until resolved, as part of its watchdog function.

The human rights activist said that the media had not adequately invoked the Freedom of Information Act to seek and obtain information that would promote accountability, justice and good governance.

He urged media managers not to sacrifice professionalism for commercial gains through wraparound advertisements.

A newspaper wraparound (or wrap) is a high-impact advertising format where a customised, printed sheet covers the front page and often the

back page of a newspaper.

Falana said that the such a practice undermined public trust.

"The media must not sacrifice truth and objectivity on the altar of commercial gains," he said.

Falana emphasised that the media had a constitutional duty to hold government accountable and defend the rights of citizens.

He called on journalists to prioritise public interest reporting and resist pressure that could weaken their watchdog role.

He highlighted the importance of regional human rights mechanisms, saying that Nigerians could seek justice beyond national borders.

He urged the Federal Government to strengthen institutions responsible for justice delivery and ensure that victims of rights violations would receive justice in time.

Falana also called for greater collaboration between civil society organisations and the media to promote accountability and protect citizens' rights.

He reiterated that the fight against human rights violation required sustained efforts from all stakeholders, including journalists, lawyers and human rights campaigners.

**INTERACTIVE SESSION:**

Legal icon, Mr Femi Falana (6th left on back row), members of Nigeria Guild of Editors, officials of Social Economic Rights and Accountability Project, and other rights campaigners at an interactive session on Saturday, in Lagos.

Negotiations to end JUSUN strike at advanced stage —Abia Govt

UMUAHIA

The Abia Government says it has recorded major breakthrough in its negotiations with the striking Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN) in the state.

The Director-General, Abia Strategic Communication Bureau, Mr Onyebuchi Ememanka, said this at a news conference in Umuahia.

Ememanka also said that the government had maintained daily engagement with the leadership of JUSUN and was close to resolv-

ing the issues that led to the strike.

He said: "I can tell you that the State Government has been in daily engagement with the leadership of JUSUN.

"Meetings have been held regularly and talks are ongoing and, as we speak, we are almost at the point of final resolution of the issues that led to this strike," he said.

According to him, one of the major issues in dispute was the payment of leave allowance to judiciary workers.

He said the government had consistently maintained that workers on consolidated salaries already had leave allowance captured in their salary structure, "a fact that JUSUN later acknowl-

edged during negotiations.

"The only point of divergence was that prior to the 2025 agreement between government and JUSUN, the workers were receiving five per cent as leave bonus, while the 2025 agreement increased it to 10 per cent.

"They are asking for arrears owed before the 2025 agreement and government has agreed to pay the five per cent arrears.

"So, the issue of leave bonus has been conclusively settled," he said.

On pension payments to retired judiciary workers, Ememanka said that the government insisted that only verified retirees would receive pensions.

"As we speak, verification of

retired judiciary workers has commenced," he said.

He further spoke on the issue of financial autonomy, saying there was substantial compliance in the state.

He contended that the judiciary was already exercising administrative and financial control over its operations.

"The executive arm of government does not pay salaries directly to judiciary staff.

"Every month, the judiciary presents its bill and government releases the bulk allocation to that arm of government.

"The Chief Judge, as head of that arm, determines how the funds are apportioned."

NLS pledges legal support Nigerian workers

LAGOS

The Nigerian Law Society (NLS) has commended Nigerian workers for their resilience, dedication and sacrifices in the face of prevailing economic challenges.

In a goodwill message to mark Workers' Day, the President of NLS, Chief Mela Nunghe (SAN), said the society stood in solidarity with

workers across all sectors of the economy.

Nunghe noted that as an association of legal practitioners committed to the rule of law, good governance and protection of fundamental rights, the NLS holds Nigerian workers in high regard.

"Every day, workers from public servants to private sector employees, from professionals to artisans, keep the

wheels of the nation turning, often under very difficult conditions," he said.

He acknowledged that workers were currently grappling with rising cost of living, insecurity, unstable policies, as well as delayed or inadequate remuneration.

According to him, the NLS remains committed to supporting workers and ensuring their rights are protected.

"The Nigerian Law Society wants every worker to know that you are not alone; we stand firmly with you and reaffirm our unwavering commitment to your welfare," he said.

Nunghe added that the law remains a vital safeguard for workers, assuring that the society would continue to deploy its legal expertise to defend collective bargaining rights, ensure prompt payment of wages and promote safe working conditions.

Rights Commission seeks urgent actions to cushion economic hardship on workers

ABUJA

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has called on the Federal Government to take immediate and decisive actions to cushion the devastating impact of rising cost of living.

The Executive Secretary of the Commission, Dr Tony Ojukwu, SAN, made this call in a statement to commemorate the International Workers' Day.

Ojukwu stressed that the recent increase in petrol prices has significantly intensified the burden on ordinary Nigerians, particularly workers who rely on daily commuting to earn a living.

He noted that transportation costs have surged beyond the reach of many, eroding incomes, reducing productivity, and undermining the dignity of labour.

He acknowledged the ongoing government efforts to address poverty in the context of global inflation.

"Such measures are yet to sufficiently ease the immediate and lived realities of Nigerians grappling with escalating costs of living.

"Transportation remains one

of the most pressing challenges, with the absence of an efficient and affordable public transport system compounding the effects of fuel price increases.

"Without urgent intervention, millions of workers risk being pushed further into economic vulnerability," he said.

The senior advocate also drew attention to persistent structural issues, including estimated electricity billing and metering challenges.

He noted also, the high cost of housing, inadequate health-care coverage under the National Health Insurance Scheme, and frequent industrial actions in the health sector driven by poor welfare conditions.

These factors, Ojukwu said, continue to place immense strain on workers and their families.

He also expressed concerns over wage disparities for workers performing similar roles, with a call for transparent and fair salary harmonisation.

Ojukwu described delays in the payment of retirement benefits as unacceptable.

"This singular act deprives retirees of dignity and security after years of service."

Kebbi magistrate's court strikes out ADC factional chairman contempt case

BIRNIN KEBBI

Magistrate's Court sitting in Birnin Kebbi has struck out a contempt case filed against a factional Chairman of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Safiyanu Bala.

At the continuation of the hearing, the defendant was brought to court from the hospital to stand trial.

During the session, Senior State Prosecutor, Hanafi Dan-Maigoro informed the court that he realised that the same case was still pending be-

fore the High Court.

He, therefore, urged the court to strike out the case to enable the parties face their case at the High Court.

The representative of the defence counsel, Mudasir Sani, concurred with the state prosecutor, saying there was

evidence that the same case was before the High Court in Birnin Kebbi.

In his ruling, Magistrate Abubakar Abdullahi-Koko said: "Based on the submissions of both counsels, the case is hereby struck out."

It would be recalled that

the factional chairman loyal to Abubakar Chika-Malami, SAN, Safiyanu Bala, was dragged to court by Abdulrazak Abubakar, another ADC factional chairman, for allegedly violating a court order and inciting public disobedience before Chief Magistrate

Court I, Birnin Kebbi.

At the last sitting, counsel to the defendant, Ahmad Fingilla, walked out of the court when Magistrate Abdullahi-Koko refused to recuse himself from the case after being accused of bias and having an interest in the matter before him.

Foreign

NEWS

Russian strikes kill 10 as Zelensky says Ukraine hits oil tankers and terminal

Russian drone and missile strikes in Ukraine have killed 10 people and injured at least 76 over the past day, reports say.

Officials in five regions around the country reported fatalities as Moscow continues to target Ukrainian cities with regular aerial attacks.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said an oil terminal in northwest Russia had been significantly damaged, while two Russian oil tankers were struck near the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk.

There are no details on damage to the ships, but Zelensky

said the vessels were part of Russia's "shadow fleet" used to evade Western sanctions.

Ukraine's military said a ballistic missile and nearly 270 drones were fired by Russia, but most were intercepted.

Three people were killed in separate incidents in Kherson region, the governor said, while two died in each of Odesa, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions and one in Sumy region.

At the same time, Russia said Ukraine had fired at least 334 drones, with the northwestern Leningrad region heavily targeted.

Export terminals there and in other regions have been target-

ed by Ukraine in recent weeks in a series of successful strikes launched by Ukraine on Russian oil infrastructure, which Kyiv says has knocked out billions of dollars worth of exports.

And on Sunday, Zelensky said infrastructure of the Leningrad region's Primorsk terminal, near Finland, had been significantly damaged, as well as three ships there.

He also said two tankers were struck by Ukrainian drones at the entrance to the port of Novorossiysk.

"These tankers were actively used for transporting oil. Now they will not be," he wrote on

Telegram.

The post was accompanied by black-and-white video footage apparently showing a naval drone approaching one of the tankers.

Russian authorities have mostly downplayed the impact of such attacks, but the Kremlin is clearly concerned about the deep reach of Ukrainian drones into its territory.

On Wednesday the Kremlin announced it was paring back its annual military parade to mark Victory Day - the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War Two, on 9 May - due to what it said was the "terrorist threat" from Ukraine.



MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE:

Merz (L) and Trump last met in the White House in March before the row erupted.

Germany troop cuts send wrong signal to Russia, say two top US Republicans

Two senior US Republican lawmakers have criticised a decision by the Pentagon to cut 5,000 US troops stationed in Germany, saying it risked undermining deterrence and would send the wrong signal to Russia.

Roger Wicker and Mike Rogers, who chair the Senate and House armed services committees respectively, said that rather than being withdrawn, those troops should be moved further east.

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell on Friday said the move followed a thorough review and recognised "theater requirements and conditions on the ground".

On Saturday, President Donald Trump said further cuts could take place, without providing details. The US has more than 36,000 active duty troops in Germany.

Germany's defence minister said the Pentagon decision was "foreseeable".

Speaking to the DPA news

agency, Boris Pistorius also stressed "the presence of American soldiers in Europe, and particularly in Germany, is in our interest and in the interest of the US".

The Nato military alliance said it was seeking clarification from Washington.

In a joint statement, Wicker and Rogers said they were "very concerned by the decision to withdraw a US brigade from Germany" as European allies move towards spending more of their economic output (GDP) on defence.

"Prematurely reducing America's forward presence in Europe before those capabilities are fully realised risks undermining deterrence and sending the wrong signal to Vladimir Putin," the statement said.

"Rather than withdrawing forces from the continent altogether, it is in America's interest to maintain a strong deterrent in Europe by moving these 5,000 U.S. forces to the east."

The senior Democrat on the House armed services committee, Adam Smith, said the decision was "not grounded in any coherent US national security policy, strategy, or even analysis" but based on "the hurt feelings of a president who is seeking political vengeance".

However, Clay Higgins, a Republican on the same committee, appeared to support the administration's move while taking a dig at perceived time-wasting by the upper chamber of Congress.

"Pulling 5K American troops from the arrogant Germans. Maybe we should send them the Senate," he said on X. "Better match, and western Europe would be so well protected by the League of the Royal Filibuster."

Washington's move comes after Trump criticised German Chancellor Friedrich Merz for saying the US had been "humiliated" by Iranian negotiators in the ongoing war.

The US military deploy-

ment in Germany is by far its biggest in Europe, compared with about 12,000 in Italy and 10,000 in the UK.

When asked on Saturday about the withdrawal of troops, Trump said: "We're going to cut way down, and we're cutting a lot further than 5,000."

Trump has also suggested pulling US troops from Italy and Spain.

Last year, Washington decided to reduce its troop presence in Romania, as part of Trump's plan to shift the focus of US military commitment from Europe to the Indo-Pacific region.

There are now growing concerns within the 32-member Nato alliance that the latest US decision could weaken the organisation.

"The greatest threat to the transatlantic community is not its external enemies, but the ongoing disintegration of our alliance," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk warned on Saturday.

Man charged with murder and sexual assault of 5-year-old Australian girl

A man has been charged with murder and two counts of sexual assault following the death of a five-year-old girl in Australia.

The body of the girl, who is identified only as Kumanjayi Little Baby, a pseudonym given to her by her family for cultural reasons after her death, was discovered on Thursday following several days of a major police search.

Jefferson Lewis, 47, was charged with her murder on Saturday night and has been scheduled to appear in a Darwin court on Tuesday.

Five people have been arrested over violent riots in Alice Springs sparked by the child's death.

Northern Territory Police Commissioner Martin Dole announced the charges against Lewis on Sunday morning.

"This remains a deeply distressing matter and our thoughts are firmly with Kumanjayi's family, loved ones and the wider community that have been deeply impacted by these events," he said.

Dole asked for the community to respect the judicial process.

Lewis was reportedly attacked in the central Australian town before he was arrested on Thursday.

A picture of Kumanjayi Little Baby, used with the permission of her family

In a statement on Thursday, Kumanjayi Little Baby's mother - who was not named - said her daughter was loved and missed.

"It is going to be so hard to live the rest of our lives without you," she said.

"We know you are in heaven with the rest of the family and Jesus. Me and your brother will meet you one day."

Kumanjayi Little Baby's grandfather called for calm on Friday.

"What has happened this week is not our way," Robin Granites, a senior Yapa (Warlpiri) elder, said in a statement.

"Our children are precious, of course we are feeling angry and hurt at what has happened.

"This man has been caught, thanks to community action, and we must now let justice take its course while we take the time to mourn Kumanjayi Little Baby and support our family."

US Supreme Court asked to restore abortion pill access

The pharmaceutical company that makes the abortion pill mifepristone has asked the Supreme Court to intervene after a lower court placed significant restrictions on access to the pill by mail.

In a decision issued on Friday, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals temporarily reinstated a requirement that abortion pills be obtained in person.

That will, for now, curb access to abortion pills - the most common method of terminating pregnancies in the US - in states where abortion is banned.

In 2023, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allowed doctors to send pills without seeing patients in person, giving women the ability to receive the pills by mail or at a pharmacy through telemedicine.

"Every abortion facilitated by FDA's action cancels Louisiana's ban on medical abortions and undermines its policy that every unborn child is human being from the moment of conception and is, therefore, a legal person," the appeals court wrote in the order.

The decision - which stems from a lawsuit brought by the state of Louisiana - will remain in effect as the case plays out.

On Saturday, Danco Laboratories, the pharmaceutical company that makes mifepristone, asked the Supreme Court to intervene and pause the ruling, temporarily restoring access to the pill.

"The resulting chaos for patients, providers, pharmacies, and the drug-regulatory system is a quintessential irreparable harm that underscores the need for emergen-

cy relief from this Court," lawyers for Danco wrote in the filing.

Mifepristone is the first of a two-pill regimen recommended by the FDA to end a pregnancy. It is widely available in states where abortion is legal.

The drugs' availability was expanded in April 2021, when the FDA said it would lift the in-person dispensing requirement for mifepristone for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2023, the FDA permanently lifted that requirement, meaning the medication could be sent by mail.

In 2024, the US Supreme Court unanimously rejected an effort to restrict access to mifepristone.

But the decision, which came two years after the court rescinded the nationwide guarantee to an abortion, left the door open to other attempts to limit the availability of the drug.

Friday's appellate order overrides a lower court's ruling from earlier this month that paused the case while the Trump administration conducts an FDA review.

Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill celebrated the court's decision, saying the Biden-era rule "facilitated the deaths of thousands of Louisiana babies (and millions in other states)".

"I look forward to continuing to defend women and babies as this case continues," she added.

But Julia Kaye, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said in a statement: "This decision defies clear science and settled law and advances an anti-abortion agenda that is deeply unpopular with the American people."

NEWS**Foreign****Two US service members reported missing in Morocco, officials say**

Two US service members have gone missing during military exercises in Morocco, the US African Command (Africom) said on Sunday.

The missing Americans were participating in African Lion 2026, an annual joint exercise designed to strengthen operations between US forces, Nato allies, and African na-

tions.

They were reported missing on Saturday near the Cap Draa Training Area, which is near the city of Tan Tan in Morocco, Africom said.

A search and rescue mission involving ground, air, and maritime resources from the US, Morocco and other countries is underway for the service members, officials said.

Masked men abduct prominent Malian lawyer in Bamako

A well-known Malian lawyer and politician critical of the ruling junta was abducted overnight by masked men in the capital Bamako, members of his family told AFP Sunday.

His disappearance comes as Mali's junta faces a major crisis following large-scale attacks on several of its strategic positions last weekend and the killing of its defence minister.

The assaults are being carried out by Tuareg separatists and Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists.

Tall was a member of the M5-RFP movement, a key player in the protests that led to the toppling of former president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

Initially an ally of the military officers who seized power in 2020, he subsequently distanced himself from the junta, becoming a vocal critic.

"Two men in balaclavas came to take him away, they left with him," a family member who witnessed the scene told AFP, adding that the family had filed a complaint for abduction.

Tall's wife, who attempted to take photos of the episode, was manhandled by the masked

men and had her phone taken away, another family member told AFP.

Last weekend's attacks targeted several strategic positions held by the junta and army across Mali, notably in Bamako and the nearby garrison town Kati, and left at least 23 people dead.

Civilians and children were among those killed and injured during the attacks, according to UNICEF.

On Friday, the prosecutor's office said it had "solid evidence" of "complicity" of certain military personnel, accusing them of helping with the "planning, coordination and execution" of the attacks.

It also alleged that exiled opposition politician Oumar Mariko, a former lawmaker and presidential candidate, had been involved.

Tall is serving as a defence lawyer for several military officers arrested in recent months by the junta on charges of "attempting to destabilise state institutions".

He has also filed legal challenges in various courts to contest the junta's decision to dissolve political parties.

**KENYA POLITICAL VIOLENCE:**

Politicians are accused of hiring young people to disrupt opposition activity.

Kenya battles to stop the 'goons and guns' as fears of political violence grow

On a quiet Wednesday last month, a Kenyan politician stopped for coffee after getting his hair cut in the western city of Kisumu.

Moments later, a group of hooded youths set upon Senator Godfrey Osoti without warning - punching and kicking him, leaving him badly injured, stripping him of his phones and valuables before vanishing into the street.

The assault was captured on CCTV. Within hours, the footage was everywhere.

The police are still investigating but the senator said this was not a robbery. Rather, he alleged, it was politically motivated as he was asked by the attackers why he was not supporting the presi-

dent's re-election bid.

The nationwide outcry that followed the assault forced Kenya's parliament to summon the country's top security chiefs.

For many Kenyans, the attack felt less like a shocking outlier and more like a confirmation of something they had long feared - that the country was sliding, once again, toward an era of deadly political violence.

Kenya's history of politically sponsored criminal gangs dates back to the early 1990s and the reintroduction of multiparty democracy. Unemployed youths have been hired by various politicians and turned into tools of electoral intimidation.

They were a major driver of the

unrest surrounding the shocking nationwide violence that followed the 2007 election, which left about 1,500 people dead.

And the stage is now being set for a particularly tense electoral cycle even though the next nationwide vote is up to 15 months away.

Embittered by his impeachment, Rigathi Gachagua is aiming to unseat the president in next year's poll.

Bearing a huge grudge over his 2024 impeachment and removal from government, former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua is planning to run for the presidency. In addition, there is an open split within one of the main parties.

This is all helping to raise the political temperature with attacks on politicians by hired youths - known locally as goons - becoming more brazen.

Interior Minister Kipchumba Murkomen acknowledged to a parliamentary committee that the government was struggling to contain the groups that he said had evolved from street-level outfits into "sophisticated and decentralised networks".

Murkomen, who appeared alongside Kenya's security chiefs, disclosed that more than 104 local criminal gangs were active in the country, many under the patronage of politicians.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te tours Eswatini amid diplomatic support

Taiwan president Lai Ching-te arrived in Eswatini on Saturday for a state visit to bolster ties with one of its few remaining diplomatic allies despite growing international pressure from China.

Lai attended a military welcome ceremony at the Mandvulo International Conference Hall alongside Mswati III, followed by bilateral talks between the two leaders.

The visit included the signing of a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement between Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China, and the Kingdom of Eswatini, as well as a joint communiqué affirming continued cooperation.

Mswati said his government would maintain its support for Taiwan's participation in

the international community, reaffirming longstanding diplomatic ties between the two governments.

Lai emphasized Taiwan's status on the global stage, saying the self-ruled island is a sovereign state and should not be excluded from international engagement.

"No country has the right to prevent Taiwan from contributing to the world," Lai said, adding that Taiwan would continue strengthening its capabilities and expanding cooperation with international partners.

Eswatini is the only African nation that maintains formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, as Beijing continues to pressure countries to switch recognition to the People's Republic of China.

Spirit Airlines shutting down after rescue talks collapse

Spirit Airlines is shutting down after failing to secure a \$500m (£368m) bailout from the Trump administration.

The budget airline was in talks with the US government about a rescue deal that would have saved it from going out of business.

But discussions collapsed and the carrier said in an announcement on its website on Saturday that with "great disappointment" it had "started an orderly wind-down of our operations, effective immediately". That included cancelling all of its flights, stranding many passengers and workers.

Spirit was emerging from its second bankruptcy filing in recent years before the US-Israel war in Iran, but the resulting surge in jet fuel costs pushed it over the brink.

"All Spirit flights have been cancelled, and Spirit Guests should not go to the airport," the company said in its statement posted early Saturday morning.

Passengers reported receiv-

ing messages about the cancellations, but some still arrived at the airport in the morning with their luggage. Spirit's customer service is no longer available.

The airline said it would automatically process refunds for flights purchased through Spirit with a credit or debit card to the original form of payment, but a bankruptcy court will determine how to compensate those who booked flights using a voucher, credit or airline points. Those who used a travel agent should contact the agent, it said.

It also said it could not reimburse guests for emergency hotel stays or replacement flights.

In the statement, Spirit's CEO Dave Davis said: "In March 2026, we reached an agreement with our bondholders on a restructuring plan that would have allowed us to emerge as a go-forward business.

"However, the sudden and sustained rise in fuel prices in recent weeks ultimately has left us with no alternative but to pursue an orderly wind-

down of the company."

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy on Saturday, though, disputed that account, saying Spirit's demise was not the result of fuel price increases, which are largely due to the war with Iran.

"Spirit was in dire straits long before the war with Iran," Duffy said, citing the company's multiple bankruptcy filings, in a news conference at Newark Liberty International Airport.

"Their model wasn't working," he added. "The war was not the impetus."

The airline's demise was so abrupt that it has left many ticketholders in the lurch.

One Spirit customer, Yash Kothari, told the BBC's US partner CBS News that he didn't learn about the airline's shutdown until he arrived at Philadelphia International Airport for a flight at 05:45 local time (09:45 GMT) on Saturday.

"The email came in at 1 am, so I was unaware," Kothari told the outlet.

Other US airlines - including

Delta Airlines, United Airlines, American Airlines and Frontier Airlines - have stepped in to offer "rescue fares" to stranded Spirit customers.

A passenger who asked not to be identified told the BBC that she received a notification through Spirit's app in the middle of the night, while she was on a short trip in Dallas, that all flights were being cancelled and the airline was shutting down.

"I honestly thought the app was being hacked or something," the woman said. "And then I did some quick googling and realized it was real and realized I probably needed to immediately look for flights back home. I was hoping it would give me a leg up that a lot of people who were affected were probably asleep."

Almost immediately, though, the situation began "looking pretty bleak". She ultimately secured a ticket on Frontier for roughly \$180 (£132) compared to the \$108 she had spent for her round-trip flight on Spirit.

Sports

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

Iloenyosi declares for NFF board seat

Former Nigeria international, Chikeluo Iloenyosi, has declared his intention to contest for the Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) board.



CHIKELUO ILOENYOSI

He seeks to represent the Southeast zone at the federation's next elections.

Iloenyosi told journalists on Sunday that his ambition was driven by football development.

He said the Southeast had suffered setbacks and deserved stronger representation within the federation's structure.

He said: "I'm not coming out for fun. I'm coming to ensure whatever belongs to the Southeast gets to us."

He criticised ineffective representation, saying the region needed leaders who could deliver measurable opportunities.

The former defender outlined plans to improve appointments of match commissioners across the Southeast.

He also pledged regular training seminars for coaches and referees.

Iloenyosi said grassroots football would remain central to his agenda if elected.

He added that community programmes would help unite football stakeholders across the Southeast, citing reforms in Anambra as evidence of his administrative ability.

He said: "I have shown my brothers my capacity. With little government support, I reformed football in Anambra."

He said the state was gradually regaining its status as a football hub, stressing that his ambition extended beyond securing a board seat.

He said: "Football in the Southeast must rise again. My goal is to restore our zone's rightful place."

He also backed current NFF leadership under Ibrahim Gusau and Sanusi Mohammed.

Iloenyosi said his mission was service, not financial gain, saying: "I'm not coming because of money. I'm coming to support football and help us get it right."



SHO'S FOUNDATION JUNIOR ELITE BASKETBALL

Sho's Foundation Camp ends on high in Lagos

Organisers of the Sho's Foundation Junior Elite Basketball Camp have expressed satisfaction following the successful conclusion of the three-day programme in Lagos. Camp coordinator, Philip Braide, said participants delivered impressive performances throughout the development programme.

Braide spoke with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on the sidelines of the event.

The camp, held from April 30 to May 2, featured over 60 young players aged between 17 and 21.

Braide said the grassroots initiative, now in its third edition, continued to produce players capable of competing at elite levels.

"We celebrate the campers and instructors who participated over the past three days.

"The camp has shown the talent, resilience and potential of our young female basketball players.

"They did not just attend, they rose to the challenge despite demanding sessions and intense competition.

"Their commitment to teamwork and personal improvement has been truly inspiring," Braide said.

He thanked coaches, volunteers and sponsors for supporting the players' development.

"Your support represents an investment in the future of basketball," he said.

International scouting programme to encourage grassroots football in Ondo —Sports company

A sports company, Abaj Multilinks Limited, says the Aiyedatiwa International Scouting Programme will encourage grassroots football academies, expose young players, and boost the morale of academy proprietors in Ondo State.

The Chief Executive Officer of the company, Prince Dapo Ajibade, said this at a news conference on Sunday in Akure.

Ajibade, a former chairman the Ondo State Football Agency (ODSFA), said the programme was also aimed at complementing the efforts of the agency to develop football at the grassroots level.

He noted that top football scouts from Europe and South America would be in attendance to identify and promote talented players from the state to the global stage.

According to him, the programme will feature football matches by 16 teams comprising 12 from Ondo and four from Oyo, Ekiti, and Lagos States.

"The teams are expected to arrive on May 13 and depart on May 18, while matches will be held from May 14 to May 17 at the Ondo State Sports Complex, Akure.

"The programme will provide the needed exposure for young players and create opportunities that will benefit them and the state in the long term.

"This is what we want for our youths in the state, this kind of exposure that will benefit everyone.

"The initiative will also boost the state's economy with long-term benefits, as selected

players will give back to the society that supported them. I urge coaches to prepare their players for this great opportunity," Ajibade said.

He said the programme's Local Organising Committee (LOC) would be chaired by former Vice Chairman, Ondo State Football Association, Henry Akingboju; and state Chairman, Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Segun Giwa as Tournament Director,



ONDO STATE GOVERNOR AIYEDATIWA

African Armwrestling Championship 2026: Nigeria wins six gold medals, reaches eight finals on opening day

Team Nigeria delivered a commanding performance on the opening day of the African Armwrestling Championship 2026 in Accra, clinching six gold medals and securing places in eight finals in the left-arm category, according to Sports247, which is on ground covering the event.

The strong start underlines Ni-

geria's ambition to dominate the continental championship and secure qualification slots for the 2027 African Games in Cairo, Egypt.

Across multiple weight divisions, Nigerian athletes showcased depth and consistency. In the Senior 100kg left category, Oluwatobiloba Adedokun Stephen and Emmy Nwobodo finished with silver and bronze

respectively, while Egypt's Mohammed AbdelRahman claimed gold, with all three athletes earning qualification for Cairo 2027.

Nigeria's male captain, Timi Seikpotuburu, secured silver in the Senior 110kg left category, finishing behind Egypt's Mohamed Salama, while Ghana's Dodzi Assinu took bronze. In the Senior 75kg left, Emmanuel Tuesday claimed silver, improving on his previous outing, with Ghana's Godwin Sackey winning gold.

Nigeria's gold medals came in key categories, including Mausi Zannu Elizabeth's victory in the Senior Women 55kg left, where she defeated Ghana's Rachel Lankai in the final. Adefunke Afeniforo also secured gold in the Senior Women 65kg left, while Oluwasegun Ajao Tunde triumphed in the Senior -55kg left category.



NIGERIA WINS SIX GOLD MEDALS IN AFRICAN ARMWRESTLING

Kogi Govt presents vehicle to Confluence Queens FC

The Kogi Government has presented a new 32-seater Coastal bus to Confluence Queens Football Club, as part of efforts to enhance the team's mobility and welfare for optimal performance.

Governor Ahmed Ododo, represented by the Commissioner for Information, Mr Kingsley Fanwo, presented keys of the bus to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mr Aziz Momoh, on Sunday in Lokoja.

The governor said that the gesture underscored the administration's commitment to sports development, particularly women's football.

He noted that the team had faced transportation challenges over the years, adding that the government acted promptly to address the situation upon becoming aware of it.

Ododo also commended the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Mr Monday Anyebe, for his dedication toward the realisation of the project, describing it as part of the state's broader rebranding agenda.

According to him, the initiative is aimed at improving the image of Kogi sports teams nationwide, expressing confidence that Confluence Queens would represent the state creditably.



VEHICLE PRESENTED BY KOGI GOVT TO CONFLUENCE QUEENS FC

Sports



NPFL review: Rangers shock Bayelsa United in Yenagoa, maintain top spot

Rangers International produced one of the standout performances of matchday 34 in the Nigeria Premier Football League after securing an impressive

2-0 away victory over Bayelsa United in Yenagoa.

The Flying Antelopes showed their title credentials on the road to maintain their position at the top of the league table.

Elsewhere, Enyimba defeated Remo Stars 2-1 in Aba in a thrilling encounter.

Victor Mbaoma gave Remo Stars the lead in the 21st minute before Stanley Dimgba restored parity for the hosts seven minutes later.

Chidera Michael netted the winning goal in the 49th minute to hand Enyimba maximum points.

Kun Khalifat also recorded a dramatic 2-1 victory over Kano Pillars.

Mmesoma Nnorom opened the scoring in the 55th minute, while Luis Dadong equalised

for Pillars in the 85th minute.

Oghenetega Ebetomame however struck deep into stoppage time to seal victory for Kun Khalifat.

Niger Tornadoes and Kwara United settled for a 2-2 draw in a pulsating game.

Abdulkasheed Shehu Dabai converted a penalty in the 26th minute for Tornadoes before Babatunde Bright equalised three minutes later.

Akeem Akanni gave Kwara United the lead in the 63rd minute, but Ismail Sarki rescued a point for the hosts late in the game.

In Ibadan, Shooting Stars edged Nasarawa United 3-2 in an entertaining contest.

Lucky Emmanuel scored twice in the 5th and 24th minutes before JoFrank Istifanus reduced the deficit for Nasarawa United before halftime.

2025/26 NPFL SEASON										
MATCHDAY 36										
	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts		
1	RANGERS INTL FC	36	17	11	8	44	26	18	62	
2	RIVERS UNITED FC	36	17	10	9	36	29	9	61	
3	SHOOTING STARS FC	36	17	6	13	40	39	1	57	
4	IKORODU CITY FC	35	15	10	10	38	32	6	55	
5	ASIA WARRIORS FC	36	16	7	13	30	30	0	55	
6	NASARAWA UNITED FC	36	15	8	13	36	31	5	53	
7	BENDEL INSURANCE	35	13	13	9	41	35	6	52	
8	BARAU FC	36	12	13	11	31	29	2	49	
9	KATSINA UNITED FC	35	13	10	12	32	34	-2	49	
10	PLATEAU UNITED FC	36	14	5	17	38	39	-1	47	
11	ENYIMBA FC	36	12	10	14	41	40	1	46	
12	WARRI WOLVES FC	36	12	10	14	34	39	-5	46	
13	EL KANEMI WARRIORS	36	13	7	16	30	43	-13	46	
14	KANO PILLARS FC	36	14	6	16	33	36	-3	45	
15	NIGER TORNADOES	36	12	8	16	36	36	0	44	
16	KWARA UNITED FC	36	12	11	13	30	32	-2	44	
17	KUN KHALIFAT FC	36	11	10	15	37	42	-5	43	
18	REMO STARS FC	36	13	4	19	39	45	-6	43	
19	WIKKI TOURISTS FC	35	9	13	13	32	39	-7	40	
20	BAYELSA UNITED FC	36	9	10	17	32	40	-8	40	



SIR ALEX FERGUSON

Sir Alex Ferguson hospitalised after falling ill at Old Trafford

Former Manchester United coach, Sir Alex Ferguson was taken to the hospital yesterday after falling ill at Old Trafford shortly before Manchester United faced Liverpool in the Premier League.

Alex Ferguson, 84, had arrived at the stadium ahead of the high-profile clash but required medical attention less than an hour before kick-off. Medics first treated the former United manager in the Stretford End tunnel before moving him to an ambulance for further checks.

Sources indicated the hospital visit was precautionary, with optimism that he will soon recover

at home. A source said Ferguson was sitting up in the ambulance and "okay". The club declined to comment, according to The Sun.

Ferguson remains a familiar presence at Old Trafford and regularly attends home matches from the directors' box. The Scot served as a club ambassador for 12 years after retiring from management in 2013 and remains the most decorated manager in United's history.

The incident is not believed to be connected to the brain haemorrhage he suffered in 2018, which required emergency surgery. Doctors at the time gave him a 20 per cent chance of survival

Alloy Chuwuemeka: Government should focus on infrastructure, not club ownership

Director of Football at ABS Ilorin FC, Chief Alloy Chuwuemeka, has urged the Nigerian government to concentrate more on providing infrastructure and financial support for sports rather than owning and managing football clubs, insisting that full professionalism remains the key to developing the country's football system.

Chief Alloy made the remarks while addressing journalists during the Sports Hard Talk with coach Abdullahi Biffo held, weekend at the Taiwo Awoniyi Media Center in Ilorin.

According to him, Nigeria remains one of the few countries where governments still directly own and run football clubs, a situation he believes has slowed the professional growth of the sport.

"It is only in Nigeria we operate government clubs; it is not obtainable elsewhere," Alloy stated.

"When I was presenting a paper on African football in Spain and I mentioned that there are clubs owned by the government, they were surprised. I told them that is what is obtainable where we are coming from."

He explained that he also told them that efforts are ongoing within the football ecosystem to gradually phase out the system and embrace private

ownership fully. "I also told them that we are on the verge of ensuring that phase is faced out so that we can come in professionally," he added.

Chief Alloy also commended the leadership of the Nigeria National League, led by George Aluo, for what he described as a transparent process that ensured the promotion of four privately owned clubs to the Nigerian top flight.



ALLOY CHUWUEMEKA

WorldRelays: Nigeria's mixed 4x100m team smashes African record, secures World champs slot

Nigeria's mixed 4x100m relay team has secured qualification for the 2027 World Athletics Championships in China following an impressive display at the ongoing

World Relays in Gaborone.

The quartet of Favour Ashe, Jennifer Chukwuka-Obi, Chidera Ezeakor, and Maria Thompson, clocked 40.24 seconds to finish fourth in Heat 1 on Saturday.



WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Their remarkable performance shattered the previous African record in the event, marking yet another milestone for Nigerian athletics on the global stage.

Nigeria remained firmly in contention for a podium finish heading into the final exchange but narrowly slipped behind in a fiercely competitive race that saw a new world record set. Canada stormed to victory with a time of 40.07 seconds, followed by Germany in 40.15 seconds and the Netherlands in 40.20 seconds.

Despite finishing just outside the top three, Nigeria's time was enough to guarantee qualification for next year's global showpiece in China.

Shocker in African football: Major League bans away supporters for remainder of season



In a surprise move, the African football community has been rocked by a decision from the Botola League to ban all away supporters from match venues for the remainder of the season.

According to league officials, the new regulations include:

- No allocation of stands or sections for visiting fans.
- No sale of tickets to support-

ers traveling to away matches. Complete prohibition of traveling fans to stadiums.

The league stated the measure aims to ensure the smooth progress of competitions, strengthen safety and security inside stadiums, protect all parties involved, and preserve a sporting atmosphere founded on respect and fair competition.

British school unveils plan to expand academic, sports excellence

The Head of School, Broadoaks British School, Dr Jill Cowie, says the institution is targeting significant growth in both academic excellence and sports development over the next five years.

Cowie said this in Abuja while highlighting the importance of integrating sports into education as part of the school's newly launched 2026 scholarship programme.

She outlined the school's strategic vision, noting that the scholarship programme was designed to nurture well-rounded students and expand access to quality education.

"The goal is to position the institution as a leading centre for holistic education in Nigeria and beyond," she said.

Cowie explained that on the

academic front, the school aims to consistently produce students who gain admission into top global universities, while strengthening its delivery of the Cambridge curriculum.

According to her, the plan includes expanding academic enrichment programmes such as science and mathematics competitions, debating, and global engagements like Model United Nations.

"Our target is to ensure that every child reaches their highest academic potential and is well prepared for opportunities at leading universities across the world.

"The school will also deepen its personalised learning approach, identifying students' strengths early and supporting them through tailored guidance and mentorship," she said.



BRITISH SCHOOL STUDENT

FEATURE



Skills vs certificates: Education or ability?

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As the world evolves, people are in a constant dilemma on whether to consider acquiring skills to be more tenable than obtaining certificates or vice versa. Companies and organizations, during the process of recruitment, most times consider those with certificates as being qualified, while some organizations do not mind whether or not the person to be recruited has certification relevant to the job description, provided they have the required skills to get the job done. This raises a critical question: in today's world, is it education or ability that truly matters?

A certificate is a formal recognition or proof of an individual's completion of a course of study or other requirements established by a professional body.

Hence, it is a way to attest to an individual's knowledge and competence in a specific area.

Skills, on the other hand, are an experiential proof that a person has the ability to perform a specific task or activity. They are often acquired through practice, experience, and training.

Many people prefer certificates to acquiring skills because they believe that having theoretical knowledge grants a person access to information that a skilled individual may not have. This is why one may notice that when a person obtains a degree and decides to venture into being an artisan (e.g., tailoring), there is often a touch of difference and excellence compared to someone who is skilled at performing the task but has limited knowledge of how to refine that skill.

Also, certificates serve as entry requirements. Job vacancies, from online listings to posters on the street, often call for those with National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), and other professional certifications when seeking employees. Due to this, people who acquire these certificates are likely to be the first people to be employed. This gives them leverage over individuals who may have the skills and can perform the job better but are sidelined due to lack of certification. Furthermore, certificates help to groom holders to become disciplined and committed. Students who invest four, five, or even seven years before they attain their certificates have undergone rigorous training that serves as a constant reminder of the value of discipline and dedication.

In addition, professional fields like medicine, law, and engineering require individuals to present their certificates before practicing. This is because society

seeks to avoid unqualified practitioners who may endanger lives or property. These fields are not ones that



can easily be learned through informal skill acquisition, as they involve technical expertise and specialized terminology.

Skills, on the other hand, are a true reflection of the saying "actions speak louder than words" because they demonstrate what one can do without argument.

There have been cases where graduates who claim to be certified in a particular field cannot effectively apply their knowledge in practice. In such situations, someone who has been trained in that line of work may be preferred because they can prove their competence.

Skills enhance employability and productivity. In the past, certificates were the primary requirement for employment, but in recent times, industries and organizations have recognized the importance of practical skills in solving problems. For instance, if a certified software engineer and a skilled software developer attend the same interview, the degree holder may explain concepts extensively, but when tested practically, the skilled individual may perform better, which is ultimately what organizations value.

Skills also encourage problem-solving. The acquisition of skills has enabled individuals to solve problems that theoretical knowledge alone cannot address. For example, digital skills such as AI automation, coding, cloud computing, machine learning, and software development have allowed skilled individuals to provide solutions that drive organizational growth.

In addition, many skills are self-taught or gained through experience.

Platforms like YouTube have served as valuable resources where individu-

als can access a vast library of learning materials. By watching and practicing, individuals can develop mastery without requiring formal classroom attendance, unlike certificate programs that often require physical presence.

Despite the advantages of both certificates and skills, there are shortcomings that create confusion about

which is more important.

A certificate without skill is like a fisherman going fishing without a net or hook. This implies that without practical ability, a graduate may struggle to perform basic tasks. When given responsibilities, their deficiencies become evident, as employers are more concerned with performance than definitions or theoretical explanations.

Also, certificates can lead to over-dependence on paper qualifications. This has resulted in people believing that certification alone guarantees success. While this may be true for some, many industries now prioritize competence over credentials. As a result, some graduates appear as liabilities rather than assets because they lack practical skills, even if they have excellent academic results.

On the other hand, skills alone can be limiting, as skilled individuals may lack opportunities due to the absence of formal proof. There are individuals who are highly competent but are unable to access job opportunities because they do not possess the required certifications.

Skills alone can also create challenges in gaining trust and credibility. Many organizations may hesitate to entrust responsibilities to individuals without formal qualifications, requiring them to work harder to prove their competence compared to certificate holders.

In addition, the absence of certification can limit access to structured career paths. This creates what is known as the "paper ceiling," where skilled individuals are filtered out by systems that require verified credentials. Furthermore, career advancement in many organizations depends on formal qualifications, meaning that

while skills may help secure a job, certificates often determine career progression.

However, modern trends have led to the growth of online learning platforms and the rise of digital skills such as coding, web design, and content creation. As a result, many companies now value portfolios over degrees, shifting the focus from

"What do you have?" to "What can you do?"

Beyond the arguments and comparison, the real question is no longer which matters more, but how both can be integrated to produce competent individuals.

A practical way forward is for educational institutions to incorporate hands-on training into their academic programs. Learning should go beyond theory and include practical application, as practical experiences are often more memorable and impactful.

Students should also focus on skill acquisition alongside their studies.

Rather than waiting until after graduation, they should begin developing relevant skills early, making them more competitive in the job market.

Employers, on their part, should prioritize competence alongside credentials.

Recruitment processes should include practical assessments to ensure that candidates can perform the tasks required. This will help organizations avoid hiring

individuals who are qualified on paper but ineffective in practice.

In conclusion, certificates may open doors, but skills ensure that individuals remain valuable. The future belongs not just to those who are qualified on paper, but to those who are capable in practice.

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