

Okpebholo, Edo leaders celebrate Igbinedion at 69

KADUNA

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has led a delegation of political leaders and dignitaries to celebrate former Edo State Governor, Chief Lucky

Igbinedion, on the occasion of his 69th birthday.

Governor Okpebholo and members of his entourage arrived at the Water Resources residence of the former governor, where they were warmly received by Chief Igbinedion

and his wife, Eki Igbinedion.

The governor exchanged pleasantries with the celebrant before proceeding into the reception hall amid cheers from guests and well-wishers gathered to honour the former governor.

Among dignitaries present at the birthday celebration were the Deputy State Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Sylvester Aigboboh; Edo State Representative on the Governing Board of the Niger Delta Development

Commission (NDDC), Patrick Aisowieren; and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain, Chief Tom Ikimi, among others.

Chief Igbinedion served as Governor of Edo State from 1999 to 2007 and was the first

civilian governor of the state in the Fourth Republic.

He also served as Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, where he worked alongside other governors on policies aimed at national development.

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#200

COEASU faults FG's UTME waiver for NCE candidates

Warns on falling standards

ABUJA

The Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) on Wednesday faulted the Federal Government's decision to grant admission exemptions to candidates seeking admission into Colleges of Education, warning that the move could undermine the quality of teacher

education in the country.

The union said it was not consulted before the policy was announced and cautioned against what it described as unilateral reforms capable of weakening standards in the nation's education sector.

National President of COEASU, Lawan Bazza, who addressed journalists in Abuja, maintained that any major

reform affecting teacher education must involve critical stakeholders, including unions and education professionals.

Bazza said although efforts to boost enrolment into Colleges of Education were commendable, such measures should not come at the expense of quality teacher training and long-term national development.

"We were not consulted in the discussions that led to the development of this policy or shift," he said.

"Anytime government has a policy on ground and is muting the idea, it must engage critical stakeholders and have discussions so that we understand the reason and why such policies are being pronounced.

"That is why we always call for a bottom-top approach, not a top-bottom approach."

He disclosed that the union

would convene an emergency meeting of its National Officers' Council alongside former presidents of the union to deliberate on the policy and make public its official position.

The COEASU president stressed that teacher education remained central to national growth and warned that lowering admission standards without broad consultation could have grave implications for the quality of teachers being produced across the country.

Bazza spoke while presenting resolutions reached at the union's National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held between May 6 and 9 at the Delta State College of Education.

He reiterated the union's support for ongoing reforms aimed at strengthening Col-

leges of Education, particularly the implementation of the Federal Colleges of Education Act 2023, which retains the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigeria.

According to him, the union endorsed a five-year training structure for student teachers under the dual mandate arrangement, saying the model would provide all-round professional development through deeper grounding in pedagogy and subject content.

Bazza commended the Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, and the Minister of State for Education, Suwaiba Ahmad, for efforts toward implementing the Act in line with its original intent.

On labour matters, the un-

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A FELICITATION VISIT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (left) who led other prominent sons of Edo State on a felicitation visit to former Governor, Chief Lucky Igbinedion, at his Benin City residence to celebrate and honour him (Igbinedion) on his 69th birthday.

Nigeria targets 50% reduction in road crashes by 2030 —FRSC

ABUJA

The Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Corps, Malam Shehu Mohammed, has said that Nigeria is positioning itself to lead Africa in road safety advancement, collaboration and integration.

Mohammed stated this on Wednesday in Abuja while speaking with journalists, noting that the country aims to reduce road traffic crashes and fatalities by 50 percent before 2030.

He commended Nigeria's progress in road safety management, while stressing that more work still needs to be done.

According to him, as Africa's largest economy and the lead-

ing Black nation in the world, Nigeria is expected to provide leadership and positive examples in road safety administration across the continent.

"Nigeria remains committed to ensuring safer mobility of lives, property and services across the continent," he said.

"Human life must be better valued in transportation systems."

The FRSC boss said Nigeria's hosting of the Secretariat of the West African Road Safety Organisation and the Association of African Road Safety Lead Agencies demonstrates the Federal Government's strong

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24,000 Nigerians to benefit from \$65m World Bank funding —NUC —Pg 3

NABTEB sets registration deadlines for NCEE, May/June exams —Pg 5

Ghana to repatriate hundreds of citizens from South Africa —Pgs 8

FIFA U-20 World Cup: Falconets placed in Pot 2 ahead of FIFA U20 Women's World Cup —Pg 10

Nigeria must lead Africa in agric, Akpabio charges stakeholders

IBADAN

President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, has said that Nigeria must go beyond merely surviving to becoming Africa's leader in agricultural innovation and food production.

Akpabio made the call on Wednesday at the opening of the maiden National Legislative Summit and Expo on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions held at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Ibadan, Oyo State.

The summit, themed, "Unfolding the Potential of Agricultural Colleges and Institutions through Collaboration and Innovation to Enhance Food Security and Job Creation," brought together lawmakers, researchers, development partners, investors and stakeholders in the agricultural value chain.

Represented by Deputy Senate Majority Leader, Sen.

Ashiru Oyetola, Akpabio said Nigeria must move from dependence to competitiveness and from "potential to performance."

According to him, the history of prosperous nations shows that economic growth often begins with agriculture.

"Many of today's industrial giants first built strong agricultural foundations before expanding into manufacturing and technology," he said.

"Agriculture built economies before oil ever did. This summit, therefore, is not simply about colleges and institutions. It is about the future of Nigeria.

"It is about whether we will rise to meet the demands of our time with courage, intelligence and unity of purpose."

The Senate President said the future belongs to innovators, creators, problem-solvers and builders, stressing that agriculture presents enormous opportunities for enterprise,

wealth creation, technological advancement and national development.

"Do not despise the soil. Great nations grow from it," he added.

He urged researchers and academics to support the country with ideas and innovations,

noting that Nigeria needs their discoveries, dedication and patriotism more than ever.

Akpabio stressed that modern agriculture must be driven by science, technology and mechanisation rather than crude tools and outdated practices.

"The future of agriculture will not be determined merely by hoes and cutlasses, but by research, technology, mechanisation, innovation, biotechnology, data systems, irrigation science, climate adaptation and knowledge-driven productivity.

"The farmer of the 21st century must become not only a cultivator of crops, but also a manager of science, information and enterprise," he said.

He described agricultural colleges and institutions as strategic to national development, saying they are "labo-



NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Co-chairman, Technical Committee on Invest Lagos 3.0, Dr Toyosi Akerere; committee member, Mrs. Solape Hammond; Co-chairman, Organising Committee/Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperative, Trade and Investment, Mrs. Folashade Ambrose-Medebem; Co-chairman, Organising Committee/Deputy Chief of Staff to Lagos State Governor, Mr Sam Egube, and Chairman, Media Committee/Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga Omotoso, during a news conference on Invest Lagos 3.0 in Lagos.

COEASU faults FG's UTME waiver...

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ion raised alarm over what it described as increasing intimidation of lecturers in some Colleges of Education, alleging that certain provosts victimise academic staff for participating in legitimate union activities.

The COEASU president also welcomed the appointment of Angela Ajala as Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

He further disclosed that the union had successfully concluded and signed a renegotiated agreement with the Federal Government after nearly 16 years since the last agreement was reached in 2010.

Bazza urged the government to fast-track negotiations with other education sector unions to avert disruptions across tertiary institutions, insisting that both academic and non-academic workers should operate under harmonised agreements.

The union also expressed

concern over poor salary structures in several state-owned Colleges of Education, accusing some state governments of paying lecturers what it termed "peanuts."

States specifically mentioned by the union included Kwara State, Gombe State, Osun State, Ebonyi State, Ogun State, Kaduna State, Yobe State, Oyo State, Borno State, Adamawa State, Abia State and Imo State.

According to Bazza, the continued poor remuneration of workers in the colleges could threaten industrial harmony within the institutions.

"NEC noted with grave concern and dismay the attitude of some states still paying peanuts as salaries in our respective colleges of education," he said.

He called on the Federal Government to engage state governments to ensure full implementation of agreements reached with education unions nationwide in order to sustain industrial peace and improve standards in the tertiary education sector.

Nigeria targets 50% reduction in...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

political will and commitment to road safety.

He explained that the secretariat serves as a coordinating hub for road safety activities across Africa and West Africa, with the aim of integrating safety, mobility and continental cooperation efforts.

According to him, the development further underscores Nigeria's leadership role in promoting partnership and collaboration among African countries.

Mohammed said the initiative aligns with the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety, which targets a 50 per cent reduction in global road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.

"Nigeria has adopted a target of reducing road crashes and fatalities by 10 percent annually as part of efforts to achieve the glob-

al goal within the decade," he said.

He added that member countries of the African Road Safety Lead Agencies and WARSO had shown commitment toward achieving the target.

The corps marshal identified sensitisation, public enlightenment, enforcement and community engagement as key strategies for attaining the goal.

According to him, road safety remains a collective responsibility that requires active participation from all stakeholders.

"We are committed to making Africa a place where mobility for lives, property and services is safe, and where human lives are valued," he said.

Mohammed also disclosed that Nigeria recorded a 12 per cent reduction in road traffic crash fatalities in the first quarter of 2026 compared to the corresponding period in 2025.

NUJ opens Condolence Register, announces candlelight procession for late journalist, Kingsley Uchegbu

BENIN CITY

Motions continued to pour in for late journalist, Kingsley Uchegbu, as the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, opened a condolence register in his honour at the NUJ Press Centre in Benin City.

Uchegbu, who died on May 6, 2026, after a brief illness, was a staff of ITV/Radio and the station's Government House

Correspondent attached to the Edo State Government House Press Corps.

In a statement, the Secretary of the NUJ, Edo State Council, Andy Egbon, urged journalists, friends, colleagues and sympathisers to visit the Press Centre to sign the condolence register and pay their last respects to the late reporter, described by many as calm, dedicated and committed to duty.

Egbon also announced that the union would hold a can-

dlelight procession in honour of the deceased on Friday, May 17, 2026, by 5:00pm.

According to him, the procession will begin from the NUJ Press Centre, move through Sapele Road and return to the Press Centre.

He urged journalists and members of the public attending the procession to dress in black attire as a mark of honour and respect for the departed colleague.



UCHEGBU

Women strip in protest over NNPC-China refinery deal

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

PORT HARCOURT

Elderly women from Alesa community in Elemo Local Government Area of Rivers State staged a nude protest on Wednesday over the controversial Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited and two Chinese firms for the rehabilitation and operation of the Port Harcourt Refining Company.

The protest, which marked the second week of agitation by host communities against the refinery agreement, saw elderly women and youths barricading the refinery gate, accusing the Federal Government and the NNPC of sidelining host communities in negotiations surrounding the deal.

The latest demonstration followed last week's blockade

of the refinery by youths from Alesa and Okrika host communities, who demanded the reconstitution of the Joint Community Relations Committee (JCRC) and greater involvement in discussions concerning the future of the refinery.

Although details of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the NNPC and the Chinese firms for the revamping of the Port Harcourt and Warri refineries have not been made public, the agreement has continued to generate tension among host communities insisting they deserve representation and benefits in any arrangement involving facilities located on their ancestral land.

One of the protesting women, Chief Mrs. Catherine Abbey-Wai, told journalists that the community had sacrificed too much for the refinery without enjoying corresponding benefits.

"The refinery is on our land. There is no more land again for us. We have been farming, but there is no place to farm again. Fulani herdsmen invade our land with cows, and we are supposed to stay in the house with no financial help from anywhere," she lamented.

Abbey-Wai decried the unemployment and economic hardship facing the community despite decades of oil and gas operations in the area.

"We are not working, our children who are graduates are not working. The government wants to sell the refinery to China, but the refinery is ours and so we need to be involved. That is why you are seeing us here, old and young women," she said.

She maintained that all segments of the host communities should have been consulted before the agreement was signed. "The government is supposed to reach out to all of us,

both young and old, men and women, chiefs and youths, so we can benefit from whatever they are doing," she added.

Also speaking, one of the protest leaders, Elizabeth Bouro, said the women would sustain the protest until government addressed their concerns.

"We're supposed to benefit from this refinery, but we did not benefit from anything. If the government truly wants to sell the refinery to China, we're supposed to have a meeting and discuss it so everybody will benefit from it. But nothing like that happened," she said.

According to her, the women were prepared to continue the protest indefinitely if their demands were ignored.

"If they don't answer us, we can stay here more than one month. We'll still stay here until the government answers us. Look at our old mothers. That is why we are here," she stated.

Road accidents decline slightly in Q1 2026 —NBS

ABUJA

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) says road accidents in Q1 2026 fell by 0.40 per cent compared to Q4 2025.

This is according to the latest NBS Road Transport Data Q1 2026 Report, released on Wednesday in Abuja.

The report showed 2,720 road accidents were recorded in Q1 2026, slightly lower than 2,731 in Q4 2025, indicating a marginal decline in overall

crash incidents nationwide during the period.

However, on a year-on-year basis, accidents increased by 2.64 per cent compared to 2,650 recorded in Q1 2025, reflecting a rise in road safety challenges across the country.

It stated that of the categories recorded, serious cases were highest at 1,761, followed by fatal cases at 714 and minor cases at 245 across the reporting period.

The report revealed that 1,076 males were killed in crashes, representing 78.88 per

cent, while 271 females died, accounting for 20.12 percent of total fatalities nationwide.

It also showed that 6,547 males were injured, representing 76.35 percent of total injuries, while 2,028 females sustained injuries, highlighting higher male vulnerability in road crashes.

According to the report, a total of 4,078 vehicles were involved in accidents in Q1 2026, compared to 4,059 in Q4 2025, marking a slight increase of 0.46 percent.

Commercial vehicles were most affected with 2,929 incidents, followed by private vehicles at 1,089 and government vehicles at 40, indicating higher exposure among commercial transport operators.

Regionally, the North-Central recorded the highest number of accidents with 752 cases, followed by the South-West with 699, while the South-South recorded the lowest at 137 cases.

In terms of casualties, the North-West recorded the highest with 2,675, followed by the

North-Central with 2,544, while the South-South again recorded the lowest at 402 casualties.

The report identified speed violations as the leading cause

of road accidents across all geopolitical zones, underscoring persistent behavioural and enforcement challenges in road safety management.

Nigeria must take lead in agric to survive, says Akpabio

IBADAN

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio has said that Nigeria should not simply strive to survive, but to lead Africa in agricultural innovation and food production.

Akpabio made the statement at the opening of the maiden National Legislative Summit and Expo on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan on Wednesday.

The theme of the summit is; "Unfolding the Potential of Agricultural Colleges and Institutions through Collaboration and Innovation to Enhance Food Security and Job Creation."

The senate president, represented by Sen. Ashiru Oyetola, the Deputy Senate Majority Leader, said that Nigeria must move from dependence to competitiveness.

Akpabio said, "we must move from potential to performance. The story of great nations teaches us that prosperity often begins from the soil."

"Many of today's industrial giants first built strong agricultural foundations before expanding into manufacturing and technology.

"Agriculture built economies before oil ever did. This summit, therefore, is not simply about colleges and institutions. It is about the future of Nigeria.

"It is about whether we will rise to meet the demands of our time with courage, intelligence, and unity of purpose," he said.

The senate president, however, said that the future belongs to innovators, creators, problem-solvers and builders.

"Agriculture offers enormous possibilities for enterprise, wealth creation, technological innovation and national impact. Do not despise the soil. Great nations grow from it," he said.

He, urged, researchers and academics, to help Nigeria with their ideas, saying we need your discoveries, dedication and your patriotism now more than ever.

"The future of agriculture will not be determined merely by hoes and cutlasses, but by research, technology, mechanisation, innovation, biotechnology, data systems, irrigation science, climate adaptation and knowledge-driven productivity.

"The farmer of the 21st century must become not only a cultivator of crops, but also a manager of science, information, and enterprise," he said.



DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

Oyo State All Progressive Congress (APC) governorship aspirant, Chief Bayo Adelabu (3rd L), with other party supporters, during his declaration of interest to contest in 2027 governorship elections in Ibadan.

Police rescue abducted toddler, foil mob attack in Delta

WARRI (DELTA)

The Delta Police Command has rescued a two-year-old child allegedly abducted in Warri and prevented mob lynching of a suspect linked to the crime.

The command's spokesperson, SP Bright Edefe, disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday in Warri.

Edefe said operatives of the Quick Response Squad (QRS), Warri Unit, carried out the rescue on Sunday after the suspect was intercepted by vigilant res-

idents while carrying the child concealed in a sack.

According to him, the development raised suspicion of child theft, prompting residents to apprehend the suspect.

"On May 10, police operatives successfully rescued a two-year-old child suspected to have been abducted and also prevented the lynching of the suspect at Igbudu Market, Warri.

"Before the suspect could be mobbed, operatives of the QRS swiftly responded, rescued

both the suspect and the child, and moved them to a safe location.

"The suspect, who sustained injuries from the mob action, was taken to the Police Clinic, Warri, for treatment and subsequently taken into custody for investigation," he said.

Edefe said further investigations conducted on Monday led to the identification and tracing of the child's parents.

He added that the toddler was reunited with the family in the presence of leaders of the Hausa community in Warri

South Local Government Area.

The police spokesperson also said the suspect allegedly confessed to being sent by another individual in Warri to steal the child.

He noted that efforts were ongoing to apprehend the alleged accomplice and unravel the wider network connected to the crime.

Edefe added that the command had commenced a comprehensive investigation aimed at dismantling criminal syndicates involved in child theft and trafficking in the state.

C'River: PDP urges Otu to urgently revamp healthcare sector

CALABAR

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Cross River has urged the Governor Bassey Otu-led government to urgently revamp the healthcare sector.

The Chairman, Mr Venacius Ikem, made the call at an interactive session with journalists in Calabar on Wednesday.

Ikem said that the call became necessary following obvious 'collapse, decay and neglect' in the state's healthcare delivery system..

He said that many public health facilities in Cross River required urgent government's attention.

"The only functional general hospitals in Calabar and Akamkpa operate without stable electricity supply.

"This situation has forced medical personnel to rely on petrol provided by patients' families or inbuilt torchlight in cell phones during surgeries," he said.

The PDP chairman said that the situation had exposed many patients to serious risks,

saying, "the healthcare sector is understaffed"

According to him, the shortage of qualified medical personnel has weakened service delivery in the healthcare sector, especially in rural communities.

Ikem urged the state government to give priority attention to the recruitment of medical personnel and rehabilitation of health facilities.

In his response, the Commissioner for Health, Dr Henry Ayuk, said that the Otu-led administration had invested heavily in healthcare sector de-

velopment to improve public health services.

Ayuk said that the current administration inherited huge infrastructure decay and shortage of manpower, stating however that the Otu-led government had employed a good number of nurses and doctors since it came on board.

"There has also been tremendous improvement in the welfare of health workers, especially their salaries.

"This is in addition to total overhaul of healthcare facilities across the state," he said.

24,000 Nigerians to benefit from \$65m World Bank funding —NUC

ABUJA

The National Universities Commission (NUC) has said that no fewer than 24,000 Nigerians will benefit from a new \$65 million funding phase under the World Bank-supported Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSE) project.

The Executive Secretary of the NUC, Prof. Abdullahi Ribadu, disclosed this on Wednesday in Abuja during the signing of performance contracts for the additional SP-ESSE financing.

He said the new funding builds on the success of the initial \$80 million SPESSE project, which became effective in 2021.

Ribadu said the initiative was designed to strengthen Nigeria's capacity in procurement, environmental management and social standards across public and private institutions.

According to him, the project addresses the shortage of skilled professionals in critical governance areas.

"With the support of the World Bank and under the coordination of the NUC, six

centres of excellence were established across the six geopolitical zones to provide sustainable capacity building in these critical sectors," he said.

He added that the centres were ensuring inclusivity across all regions of the country.

Ribadu said the participating universities were selected through a rigorous and competitive process that assessed institutional readiness, quality assurance and sustainability.

He said the institutions were already playing key roles in producing skilled manpower to support transparency, environmental responsibility and inclusive development.

The NUC boss described the contract signing as a renewed commitment to accountability, sustainability and institutional excellence.

He added that the centres had recorded milestones including the development of specialised academic programmes, ranging from short courses to postgraduate and undergraduate degrees, as well as investments in digital learning infrastructure and research facilities.

NEWS

Ondo: Police burst initiation rites, arrest 24 suspected cultists

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State has arrested 24 suspected cultists in Ile-Oluji, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo Local Government Area of the state during initiation ceremony of new members.

DSP Abayomi Jimoh, the command's spokesperson made this known in a statement on Wednesday in Akure.

Jimoh explained that the suspects who were members of

the dreaded Aiye confraternity, were arrested on Sunday by the operatives of the Special Anti-Cultism Squad while acting on credible intelligence.

He said that the suspects, all males, converged from different parts of the state and beyond for initiation rites in the bush in Ile-Oluji.

"The operation was executed professionally and without incident, thereby preventing what could have posed a serious threat to public peace and

security in the area.

"Items recovered from the suspects during the operation include two Aiye confraternity crested caps, substances suspected to be Indian hemp and several mobile phones believed

to be relevant to ongoing investigations," he said.

Jimoh reiterated the command's zero tolerance to cultism and all forms of violent crimes in the state.

"The command assures

members of the public that investigation into the matter is ongoing with a view to uncovering the full scope of the network and bringing all culpable persons to justice.

"Residents are encouraged

to remain vigilant and continue to support the police with timely and credible information as the command intensifies efforts to ensure lasting peace and security throughout Ondo State," he said.

Infrastructure delivery in FCT shows "governance in action" —Wike

ABUJA

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has described the delivery of infrastructure projects in the FCT as "clear demonstration of governance in action."

He stated this in Abuja on Wednesday after an inspection tour of project sites in Karu, Apo-Karshi and the Gbazango area of Kubwa.

The minister, who expressed satisfaction with the pace and quality of ongoing road projects across the capital, commended contractors for maintaining high standards while sticking to strict delivery timelines.

He commended the contractor executing the Karu township road for impressive performance, noting that "the firm's track record, including the Ushafa Road inaugurated in 2025, justified the administration's trust in indigenous capacity."

"We are very satisfied with the level of work and the quality at Karu. I'm quite impressed and it is one of the roads that will be inaugurated during the third-year anniversary of Mr President."

On the long-awaited Apo

to Karshi Road, the minister assured residents that the contractor would complete the project before the end of the year.

For Gbazango, popularly known as Arab Road in Kubwa, the minister also praised the contractor's efficiency, along with the Gomani to Yanjoji road, also

slated for inauguration to celebrate President Bola Tinubu's third anniversary.

Wike said that the inspection, marked by spontaneous cheers from local residents, validated the impact of the FCT Administration's efforts.

"You can see how happy the residents here are. Without an invitation, they took time to really appreciate that they can see governance in action," he said.

He emphasised that the administration's priorities are excellence and speed, ensuring that road projects are in tandem with engineering benchmarks and deadlines.

"One thing is doing a quality job, and another thing is keeping to the timeline."

"I assure you that the FCT will soon witness a flurry of inaugurations to celebrate the administration's milestones," he added.

FOI: Group petitions INEC over alleged land allocation to staff by FCTA

ABUJA

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) has submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) seeking clarity on allegations of land allocations to senior electoral officials by Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA).

The letter written to INEC by the group, Abuja School of Social and Political Thought (ASSPT), dated May 13 and made available to newsmen on Wednesday in Abuja, was signed by its Executive Director, Dr Sam Amadi.

The NGO said that the request was to verify recent media reports claiming that several senior INEC officials, including national commissioners and directors, were allegedly allocated plots of land

under the current Minister of FCT, Nyesom Wike.

According to the letter received by the office of INEC chairman, ASSPT is demanding comprehensive details regarding the alleged transactions to safeguard Nigeria's democratic process.

In the request, the group asked INEC to provide specific information within seven days, including: verification of allocations - whether any serving INEC officials received land from FCTA under the current minister.

It also demanded the names, designations and departments of any official who allegedly received such allocations as well as the dates, locations and sizes of the plots allocated.

The group also demanded clarification on whether the officials declared such allocations in line with public service rules and asset declaration requirements.

**MEDIAN NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT:**

L-R: Chairman, Senate Committee on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions, Sharafadeen Alli; representative of the Senate President, Yisa Ashiru and Executive Director, Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute, Prof. Lateef Sanni, during the Median National Legislative Summit and Expo on Agricultural College and Institutions in Ibadan on Wednesday.

NHCR seeks stronger collaboration on human rights protection nationwide

DAMATURU

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has called for stronger collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for the promotion and protection of human rights in Nigeria.

The Executive Secretary of the NHRC, Tony Ojukwu, stated this at a pre-zonal consultative meeting on the implementation of the NAP (2024-2028) on Wednesday in Damaturu.

Ojukwu, represented by Labaran Babangida, the state Co-ordinator of the commission said the forum was organised

by the NHRC in collaboration with Tridose Global Concepts Limited.

He said the consultation was aimed at discussing modalities, clarifying roles and responsibilities, harmonising efforts across sectors and addressing emerging gaps in the implementation of the action plan.

"This forum will provide us with the platform to discuss modalities, clarify roles and responsibilities, harmonise efforts across sectors, and address emerging gaps.

"More importantly, it will also allow us to strengthen synergy between Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Civil Society

Organisations (CSOs), recognising that sustainable human rights protection can only be achieved through coordinated and inclusive action," he said.

The executive secretary described the NAP as a guiding document for the promotion and protection of human rights in line with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 1993.

According to him, the plan reflects Nigeria's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments.

He said Nigeria adopted its first NAP between 2009 and 2013, adding that the current 2024-2028 plan emerged after a decade-long consultative

process led by the NHRC.

Ojukwu said the process involved Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Civil Society Organisations, as well as steering committees and other stakeholders across the country.

He said with the implementation cycle already underway, there was a need to monitor and evaluate activities across agencies and strengthen implementation strategies where necessary.

The NHRC chief urged participants to engage constructively and offer practical recommendations toward achieving the objectives of the action plan.

He said the selection of participating MDAs and civil society groups was based on their relevance and strategic roles in advancing and protecting human rights.

NCAA launches digital drone registration platform

LAGOS

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has launched a digital registration platform for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, strengthening oversight of Nigeria's expanding drone airspace.

NCAA Director-General, Capt. Chris Najomo, unveiled the portal on Wednesday at the sixth Africa International Drone Technology Conference in Lagos.

Najomo said his challenge to

stakeholders in 2025 inspired a comprehensive framework supporting existing Part 21 regulation.

He said the framework had been incorporated into Nigeria's International Civil Aviation Organisation master plan.

"Nigeria's integrated RPAS policy has moved beyond suggestion to a practical national proposal.

"We are strengthening oversight through this digital registration platform, unveiled today for industry stakeholders.

"DroneTecX has supported

NCAA efforts to curb drone proliferation and manage lighter recreational categories.

"I approved collaboration with DroneTecX to develop flyer registration and certification processes.

"This will enable NCAA to issue Flyer Identification for lower-category operators," he said.

Najomo said drones under 250 grammes remain a major focus within the recreational open category.

He said the initiative would ensure hobbyists operate within a safe, secure aviation eco-

system.

Najomo praised the Minister of Aviation, Festus Keyamo, for elevating the roadmap into a national priority.

He also commended conference convener, Fortune Idu, for advancing drone advocacy and training across Africa.

"Ensure your deliberations support the ongoing 10-year UAS development plan," Najomo urged participants.

The platform marks a major step towards automated oversight within Nigeria's drone industry.

FG, UNESCO rally stakeholders on tech, innovation

ABUJA

The Federal Government and the UNESCO have called for stronger collaboration among stakeholders to reposition Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as driver of economic growth.

They said this on Wednesday at the opening of a three-day workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation and the Renewed Hope Agenda held in Abuja.

The workshop was organised by the UNESCO in col-

laboration with the Sheda Science and Technology Complex (SHETSCO).

Dr Kingsley Udeh, Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, said economies were being transformed by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, digital systems, space technologies and green innovations.

“For Nigeria, the message is clear, sustainable national development must be driven by science, technology and innovation.

“Science, technology and

innovation remains central to digitalisation, food security, healthcare advancement, digital transformation and economic diversification.

“The Renewed Hope agenda provides a clear opportunity to reposition innovation as a strategic driver to economic growth, job creation.

“Science, Technology and Innovation must no longer be viewed as the various sectors, but as critical enablers across agriculture, health care, manufacturing, education, energy and digital economy,” he said.

On the establishment of the National Research Innovation and Development Fund (NRIDF) and recent approval by the Federal Executive Council, Udeh said the Sankore project was central to its implementation.

Udeh said the federal government was making deliberate efforts to promote research to industry collaboration, encourage demand-driven innovation, improve infrastructure and create clear pathways for commercialisation.

Dr Dimitri Sanga, Director,

UNESCO West Africa and Officer-In-Charge (OIC) UNESCO Abuja, said the project was targeted as part of initiatives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda of 2030 and the African Union 2063 Development Agenda.

Represented by Dr. Enang Moma, Head of Science Sector, Sanga said that UNESCO, had over the years supported Nigeria in strengthening STI system.

“UNESCO supported Ni-

geria in the development of a robust national STI policy, National reporting on the 2021 Recommendation on Open Science.

“UNESCO also recognises that the translation of these policies and instruments into tangible socio-economic outcomes remains limited and there is need to strengthen the National Innovation System (NIS) for a stronger integration of research, industry, and government.

KADSEMA begins statewide flood preparedness campaign

KADUNA

The Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency (KADSEMA), has commenced a statewide flood risk assessment and sensitisation campaign ahead of the 2026 rainy season.

The Executive Secretary of KADSEMA, Mr Usman Mazadu, said on Wednesday that the exercise followed the release of the Seasonal Climate Prediction (SCP) and Annual Flood Outlook (AFO).

Mazadu said the exercise was aimed at identifying causes of flooding, assessing vulnerable communities and recommending measures to mitigate flood risks during the rainy season.

He said the agency, in collaboration with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), NGOs and humanitarian organisations, was conducting assessments and awareness campaigns in flood-prone communities across the state.

According to him, the as-

essment will cover the three senatorial zones of the state to strengthen preparedness and improve emergency response planning.

Mazadu said the first phase of the exercise covered communities within Kaduna metropolis, including Rafin Guza, Malali, Ramat Road, Sabon Tasha, Bashama and Nasarawa.

He identified indiscriminate dumping of refuse in waterways, blocked drainage channels, construction along waterways and river overflow as major causes of flooding in the affected communities.

Speaking during the exercise, Mr Akhaine Michael said many drainage channels in the areas visited were filled with debris and required expansion for free flow of water.

Michael said the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps would continue to support KADSEMA through security coverage and operational assistance during field assessments aimed at minimising flood disasters and protecting lives and property.



2026 MINISTERIAL NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Economic Planning and Budget, Mr Olalekan Balogun; Permanent Security, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Olayinka Ojo; Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget, Mr Ope George, and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Strategy, Mr Olanrewaju Bajulaye, during Lagos State Government 2026 Ministerial news conference by the Ministry in Commemoration of the seventh year in Office of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu in Lagos.

Troops apprehend 5 suspected railway vandals in Kaduna

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army troops under Operation FANSAN YAMMA have apprehended five suspected vandals and intercepted a truck loaded with vandalised railway tracks in Kaduna State.

Operational report made

available to reporters on Wednesday revealed that the operation was carried out around Kakau area of Chikun Local Government Area following credible intelligence on the movement of suspected economic saboteurs.

According to the report, the troops swiftly mobilised and

intercepted a trailer conveying the vandalised rail materials at about 9 p.m. on Tuesday.

It added that “the suspects were apprehended in the process and the recovered items include large quantities of vandalised railway tracks loaded in a trailer.”

It stated that the suspects were currently in military custody, undergoing preliminary investigation.

The report noted that the operation was part of ongoing efforts to curb infrastructure vandalism and protect critical national assets across the country.

The military reiterated its commitment to sustaining operations aimed at denying criminal elements freedom of action, while urging the public to continue providing timely and credible information to security agencies.

NABTEB sets registration deadlines for NCEE, May/June exams

BENIN CITY

The National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) has announced May 24 and May 31 as deadlines for the ongoing registration for the National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) and the May/June In-School Certificate Examinations.

The disclosure is contained in a statement issued on Wednesday in Benin City by the board's Assistant Director of Media and Protocol, Uchechukwu Olisah.

The Registrar and Chief Ex-

ecutive Officer of NABTEB, Aminu Mohammed, urged schools, parents, guardians and prospective candidates to complete their registration before the deadlines.

Mohammed said registration for the May/June In-School Certificate Examinations would close on May 31, while that of the NCEE would end on May 24.

He explained that the board had streamlined the registration process through designated online portals to ensure a seamless and stress-free experience for candidates and schools.

According to him, schools registering candidates for the May/June In-School Examinations are required to obtain registration slots through their respective state offices.

He added that schools must enrol candidates using the NABTEB biometric software and complete the process via the official portals, after obtaining login details and making the required payments.

Mohammed further stated that candidates for the NCEE are to obtain Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) through state offices before completing their registration

online, while schools can also facilitate bulk registration using designated login credentials.

The registrar reiterated the board's commitment to leveraging technology to enhance examination administration and service delivery nationwide.

He urged candidates and school authorities to strictly adhere to the registration guidelines and ensure accurate submission of candidates' data.

Mohammed also advised the public to contact the nearest NABTEB state office or visit the board's official registration platforms for further clarification and support.

FG seeks to modernise armed forces through partnerships, local capacity

ABUJA

The Federal Government is actively modernising its armed forces in 2026 by combining international partnerships, technology transfer, and a robust push for local capacity to become a self-reliant producer of defence equipment.

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa, made this known during a working visit to Monaco alongside senior officials of the ministry.

This was contained in a statement by Mrs Enderline Chukwu, Deputy Director Information and Public Relations, on Wednesday in Abuja.

Musa said the initiative was part of efforts to strengthen Nigeria's defence architecture through the proposed Multi-domain Hybrid Intelligence Shield (HIS) project.

He noted that the ministry was engaging with MARSS UK Ltd and its Nigerian partner, MPS Mikopowers Ltd, to drive

the project.

According to him, the visit focused on practical demonstrations, technical engagements and strategic discussions aimed at enhancing command, control, surveillance and integrated security capabilities.

“We must leverage technology for intelligence, surveillance and service delivery. We have partners and allies ready to support us, and we will continue to work with them as a team,” he said.

Musa emphasised the need to build indigenous operational capacity while leveraging international expertise to tackle emerging security challenges such as terrorism, border insecurity, illegal mining, piracy and threats posed by unmanned aerial systems.

The minister said the engagements also covered proposals for the establishment of national and regional command centres, mobile response units and a Centre of Excellence for simulation, training and doctrine development.

NEWS

JUDICIARY

Fraud: Court orders freezing of convicted ex-AGoF's multi billion naira assets, investments

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday ordered the confiscating and forfeiting of multi billion naira assets and investments owned by Chukwunyeri Nnabuoku, the convicted former acting Accountant-General of the Federation (AGoF), to the Federal Government.

Justice James Omotosho, in a ruling on a motion on notice filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), held that the application was meritorious.

Citing previous Supreme Court decisions, Justice Omotosho said, "in crimes such as money laundering, forfeiting the proceeds of crime is deemed to be a natural consequence of conviction."

According to Justice Omotosho, the above decisions of the Supreme Court clearly shows that properties obtained with proceeds of crime are liable to be forfeited after such person has been convicted.

"The essence of this is to ensure that the convict derives no further benefits from such properties.

"The convict here will not be allowed to enjoy those properties which are being sought to be forfeited.

"He has been convicted and those properties have been established to emanate from proceeds of illegal activities," he said.

The judge observed that counsel to the convict raised the issues of the matter being subject of

appeal and that the order of forfeiture ought not to be granted because the application amounts to an abuse of court process.

Responding, the judge said that the mere fact that a notice of appeal had been filed does not preclude the court from granting a final forfeiture of the said properties.

"Forfeiture in this instance is seen as part of the judgment.

"In fact, it is similar to the sentencing handed down by the court.

"Where a person has been convicted and a notice of appeal has been filed, would that preclude such person from being sentenced?"

"The answer to this is no, as sentencing usually follows conviction," he said.

The judge said granting the forfeiture order does not disturb the likely outcome of the appeal.

"The aim of it is to stop the convict from enjoying the proceeds of his unlawful activity.

"Consequently, this forfeiture order will be granted regardless of the filing of a notice of appeal."

On whether it was an abuse of court process, Justice Omotosho said the convict did not attach any process of court showing that a final order of forfeiture had been granted or process showing that an order of final forfeiture is being sought against the same properties and the same convict.

"The convict was convicted by this court after a full trial and thus, this issue is within the control of this court.

"No evidence of abuse of

court process exists.

"Consequently, that issue is hereby dismissed.

"In final analysis, the properties of the convict which have been identified to be purchased from proceeds of crime in this matter are hereby finally forfeited to the Federal Government of Nigeria."

The judge, therefore, ordered the confiscating and forfeiting of the assets and properties described in Schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the EFCC's application to the Federal Government having been established to be proceeds of unlawful activities.

The anti-graft agency had, in the motion marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/240/2024 and filed on April 1, sought one relief.

It sought an order of the court confiscating and forfeit-

ing the assets/properties described in Schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the application to the Federal Government of Nigeria being proceeds of unlawful activities.

Schedule 1 contains monies in different bank accounts.

These include ₦12,526,206.55 in Temeo Synergy Concept Limited's Zenith Bank account number: 1016901286; ₦4,102,570.25 in Turge Global Investment Limited's Zenith Bank account; 1016901279 and ₦682,904.36 in Laptev Bridge Limited's Zenith Bank account: 1016727695.

It also includes ₦51,279,067.53 in Arafura Transnational Afro Ltd's Zenith Bank account number: 10167277640 and ₦220,000,000.00 in EFCC Recovery Account domiciled with Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN),

which was allegedly refunded by Nnabuoku.

In the Schedule 2, the property forfeited is a five bedroom (stand alone) duplex at No. 20, City Gate Estate, Kukwaba Abuja, valued at ₦64,000,000.00 (sixty four million naira) with an additional ₦3,000,000.00 (three million naira) paid as infrastructural development levy on the property.

The EFCC said that the house key was voluntarily submitted to the commission by Nnabuoku, himself, as per restitution.

Schedule 3 contains the convict's investment in stocks, domiciled in different banks and companies.

They are 10,000,000 stocks with Access Holdings; 7,521,860 stocks with First Bank of Nigeria Holdings Plc; 4,500,000 stocks with Guaranty Trust Holding Company and 10,045,035 stocks with UBA Plc.

They also include 5,000,000

stocks with Zenith Bank Plc; 279,620 stocks with Berger Paint Nigeria Plc; 140,183 stocks with Cadbury Plc; 1,000,000 stocks with Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc and 500,000 stocks with Nascon Allied Industries Plc.

The schedule equally contains 551,039 stocks with Dangote Cement Plc; 500,754 stocks with Africa Prudential Registrar Plc; 410,603 stocks with United Capital Plc and 395,000 stocks with Dunlop.

According to the EFCC, the total current market value of Nnabuoku's stock as at March 29, is N1,941,805,342 (one billion, nine hundred and forty one million, eight hundred and five thousand, three hundred and forty two naira).

After the ruling, counsel who appeared for EFCC, Ogechi Ujam, and ex-AGoF's lawyer, Isodore Udenko, thanked the court for the well-delivered ruling.

Court voids suit seeking to award Blue Silk rank on Nigerian lawyers

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday dismissed a suit seeking an order by applicants to confer the rank of a Blue Silk on legal practitioners in Nigeria as alternative to the rank of a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN).

Justice James Omotosho, in a judgement, held that the applicants' suit, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/421/2026, was without merit.

"The argument by the applicants that they have a right to freedom of assembly and association does not come into play here.

"The legal profession is not like joining a political party wherein one can jump from party to party.

"There is only one legal profession in Nigeria duly recognised by statute, thus a person cannot decide to form his own legal profession as same would be contrary to the law and thus void.

"This therefore means that the acts of the applicants in

seeking to award rank of Blue Silk on any legal practitioner in Nigeria is totally void and unrecognised by law," he said.

According to the judge, the actions of the applicants is totally against laid down law and regulations guiding the legal profession in Nigeria.

"The applicants cannot hide under fundamental rights to breach statutory provisions.

"This court will not allow it.

"The applicants have failed to establish the breach of their fundamental rights to freedom of association and right to fair hearing.

"The applicants have the burden to establish breach of their fundamental rights but have utterly failed to do so.

"Their claim is therefore ungrantable and their suit will be dismissed.

"This court will also follow up the decision in this matter with a consequential order which it is empowered to do and give effect to this judgment," the judge said, citing a previous Supreme Court decision.

MEDIA-STATE DIALOGUE SERIES:

L-R: Course Coordinator, University of Ibadan (UI), Dr Kingsley Ogunne; Head of Political Science Department, UI, Prof. Dhikuru Yagboyaju; Guest Speaker, Mr Femi Adesina; his wife, Adenike and wife of the Head of Department of Political Science of the university, Hajiya Rakiya Yagboyaju, during a Media-State Dialogue Series from Newsroom to Aso Rock delivered by Femi Adesina of the Department of Political Science in Ibadan.

3 scavengers docked for allegedly receiving stolen property

ABUJA

Three scavengers were on Wednesday docked in a Life Camp Magistrate Court in Abuja for allegedly receiving a stolen tool for borehole drilling, worth N1.9million.

The police charged Usman Abubakar, 40; Nura Lawal, 21 and Nura Umar, 20 with crim-

inal conspiracy and receiving stolen property.

However, the defendants pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecution Counsel, Charity Nwachukwu, told the court that the complainant, Mr Tunde Jegede of B39, Citech Estate Life camp, Abuja, reported the matter at Life camp police station on April 27.

Nwachukwu said on April

27, the defendants conspired and bought one "Hammer" from one Pausat Dapus, the security guard attached to the Citech company.

Nwachukwu said during the police investigation that the defendants made confessional statement and the stolen property was recovered.

The offence, she said, contravened the provisions of sec-

tions 97, and 317 of the Penal Code.

Magistrate Best Ojukwu admitted the defendants to bail in the sum of N200,000 and one surety each in like sum.

Ojukwu ordered that the Sureties must reside within the court jurisdiction and provide reliable means of identification.

She adjourned the matter until July 7 for hearing.

Man, 35, docked for allegedly defrauding rice vendor of N17.8m

IBADAN

The police on Wednesday, charged a 35-year-old man, Ganiyu Ayuba, before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' court, in Ibadan, for allegedly defrauding a rice vendor to the tune of N17.8 million.

The defendant who resides at Kishi Town in Ibadan, was charged on two counts bordering on fraud and stealing.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, ASP Sikiru Ibrahim, alleged that the defendant committed the offences on Dec. 15, 2025.

He alleged that the defendant obtained the sum of N17.8 million from one Mr. Salahudeem Lateef, under the pretence of selling to him 400 bags of rice.

According to the police, the defendant knew that his rep-

resentation to the complainant was false, as he failed to supply the rice.

The prosecution alleged that the defendant stole the money from the complainant and fraudulently converted same to his own use.

He said that the defendant was consequently, arrested following police investigation.

The offences contravene the provisions of Section 390 (9)

and 419 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State 2000.

The Magistrate, Mr M. Mudashiru granted the defendant bail in the sum of five million naira, with two sureties in like sum.

The court held that one of the sureties must be a blood relative of the defendant, while the second surety must have three years tax clearance.

He adjourned the case until June 23, for hearing.

Foreign

NEWS

Trump arrives in China for high-stakes meeting with Xi Jinping

US President Donald Trump descended the steps of Air Force One in Beijing on Wednesday evening, greeted with pomp and pageantry ahead of a high-stakes meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

During his two-day visit, the global superpowers are expected to discuss tariffs, competition over tech, the Iran war and the US's relationship with Taiwan.

Trump returns to a more assertive China since his last visit in 2017, as he faces growing scrutiny of his military campaign in the Middle East.

Trump was originally scheduled to make the trip in March, but it was delayed because of the US and Israel's war in Iran, which continues to roil the global economy.

The president was greeted on the red carpet by Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng, one of China's top leaders.

The move is being read as a show of respect for the US president from Beijing, after a lower-level leader received Trump on his last visit.

A brass band and flag wavers holding Chinese and American flags chanted "welcome welcome, a warm welcome", as the president gave his signature fist pump to the large greeting party, standing by the dozen in tight, uniformed rows.

The US president was accompanied by his son Eric Trump and a slew of US tech industry titans, including Tesla's Elon Musk and Nvidia's Jensen Huang among them.

Other CEOs expected to be travelling with Trump include Tim Cook of Apple, Larry Fink of BlackRock, and Kelly Ortberg of Boeing.

"I will be asking President Xi, a Leader of extraordinary distinction, to 'open up' China so that these brilliant people can work their magic, and help

bring the People's Republic to an even higher level," Trump said in a post on social media ahead of his landing.

Trump said that will be his "very first request" when he meets the Chinese leader.

Trade between the two countries has declined in recent years amid an escalating tariff war and other restrictions.

Last year, bilateral trade totalled \$414.7bn (£307.3bn), a sharp decline from the \$690.4bn (£511.6bn) recorded in 2022.

Trump is also hoping to bring down the trade deficit between the two countries. Last year, the US imported more than \$200bn worth of goods from China than it exported there.

China, for its part, has sought to present itself as formidable competitor in the global AI arms race, increasing its demand for US-made computing chips.

But many in the US are wary

of Chinese firms stealing their technology, prompting tighter restrictions on exports.

This is where Beijing could wield its leverage over rare earth metals, essential for high-tech industries, a tool the country previously used in retaliation against Trump's tariffs.

On trade, Trump is expected to push for increased Chinese purchase of US agricultural products, while Beijing is likely to pressure Washington to lower tariffs on Chinese goods.

What to know as Trump visits Xi in China

The war in Iran is also expected to dominate the agenda as Trump meets Xi.

China relies a considerable amount on Iran for oil exports, which have effectively been cut off as ships are unable to navigate the Strait of Hormuz.

The country also faces growing pressure from the US to use its economic and political influence over Iran.

Philippine Senate in lockdown after gunshots fired

The Philippine Senate was locked down with military personnel seen entering the building where a senator wanted by the International Criminal Court had sought refuge.

Rounds of gunfire were heard but officials have not revealed who fired the shots. They said there were no casualties.

Senator Ronald Dela Rosa said earlier he believed his arrest was imminent and urged Filipinos to prevent it. He is safe and with security personnel, officials said.

He is accused by the ICC of killing dozens of people when he was police chief during former president Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs, in which thousands of alleged dealers were shot and killed. Duterte has been held at The Hague since March 2025.

TV footage showed police commandos in fatigues entering the Senate building in Manila early on Wednesday evening, with anti-riot policemen with shields and helmets surrounding the perimeter.

Protesters outside the Senate demanded Dela Rosa's detention, calling for him to be sent to stand trial with Duterte.

His lawyers have appealed to the Supreme Court to block his

extradition.

The senate building has been locked down since the shots, and senators are holed up inside.

Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla said the president had given "strict instructions" to secure the senators.

Dela Rosa is "safe" and with security personnel, he added.

Armed police commandos in fatigues were seen entering the Senate

"We are not here to arrest Senator Dela Rosa," he said. "In fact, we are here to protect him. Let that be clear. I made that clear to his family."

No one has been arrested for the shooting, Remulla said.

Senate speaker Alan Peter Cayetano asked the public to send "any videos that could help with the investigation".

Duterte has refused to recognise the ICC proceedings, arguing that during his presidency in 2019 the Philippines had pulled out of the Rome Statute, the ICC's founding agreement.

But last month, judges in the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber rejected that argument on the grounds that the alleged crimes had happened between 2011 and 2019 - while the Philippines was still a member of the ICC - paving the way for Duterte to stand trial.



HIGH-STAKES MEETING:

Trump arrives to a grand reception in China

Israeli strikes on cars in southern Lebanon kill 12, health ministry says

At least 12 people have been killed in seven separate Israeli air strikes on cars south of Beirut, Lebanon's health ministry says, as the war between Israel and the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah continues despite a ceasefire.

Eight people, including two children, died when drones targeted three vehicles on the coastal highway in the Barja, Jiyeh and Saadiyat areas, around 20km (12 miles) from the capital, according to the ministry.

The others were killed in strikes on four cars further south, in the city of Sidon and the towns of Maaliyeh, Chaaitiyeh and Naqoura.

The Israeli military has not yet commented. But it did say Israeli forces struck Hezbollah infrastructure in several southern areas.

Hezbollah fighters also launched a number of drones that exploded near an area where Israeli troops were operating in southern Lebanon, it added, without reporting any casualties.

On Tuesday, two paramedics from the state-run Civil Defence emergency service were among 13 people killed in strikes in southern Lebanon, according to the Lebanese health ministry.

It says more than 400 people have been killed across the country since the ceasefire was an-

nounced by US President Donald Trump almost a month ago.

Israel has intensified its air and artillery strikes in recent days, particularly in southern Lebanon, saying it is targeting Hezbollah fighters and infrastructure.

Hezbollah has carried out drone, rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli troops occupying parts of southern Lebanon and on communities in northern Israel.

On Thursday, Israeli and Lebanese officials are expected to hold a third round of direct talks in Washington to try to find a way to stop the fighting.

In a letter released on Tuesday, Hezbollah's leader Naim

Qassem dismissed those efforts and said his group would "not abandon the battlefield".

The conflict started on 2 March, two days after the US and Israel launched a joint attack on Iran. Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel, and Israel responded with widespread air strikes and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon.

At least 2,896 people have been killed in Lebanon since then, according to the health ministry, whose figures do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Israeli authorities say 18 soldiers and four civilians have been killed over the same period.

Russian drone attacks kill 13 in Ukraine after ceasefire expires

Thirteen people have been killed and at least 41 injured in a slew of Russian drone and bomb attacks across Ukraine between Tuesday and Wednesday, officials have said.

The worst-hit was the central Dnipropetrovsk region, where eight people were killed and 11 injured throughout Tuesday. One casualty was reported in the eastern Donetsk region the same day.

Russian attacks continued on Wednesday, with three people reported killed in the western Rivne region and one person in Zaporizhzhia, in the south.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said 800 drones had been launched by Russia throughout the day and warned that missile launches could follow.

In Russia, officials said Ukrainian drones hit three industrial facilities overnight. No casualties were reported.

The latest attacks come shortly after a three-day US-brokered ceasefire expired late on Monday.

Both Russia and Ukraine reported multiple violations - mostly along the vast frontline - during the truce, but no major aerial attacks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In a post on Telegram on Wednesday morning, Dnipropetrovsk regional head Oleksandr Hanzha reported more than 30 Russian attacks on three districts throughout Tuesday.

He said two people were

killed in Zelensky's hometown of Kryvyi Rih, and another six in the Synelnykove district - just south-east of the regional capital Dnipro.

"More than two dozen houses were damaged," Hanzha added.

In the north-eastern Kharkiv region, five people were reported injured and a number of residential houses damaged.

Russian drone strikes were also reported in the southern Odesa, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, as well as in Poltava - Ukraine's central region.

Writing on Telegram on Wednesday morning, Zelensky said 14 Ukrainian regions were attacked throughout Tuesday, and there were more attacks overnight.

He accused Russia of "purposefully" targeting Ukraine's railway infrastructure and other civilian facilities.

Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 139 drones in the past 24 hours. It said 111 projectiles were shot down or intercepted, but recorded 20 direct hits in 13 locations.

Russian attacks continued on Wednesday, with Ukraine's Hur military intelligence warning that such strikes could be "protracted".

In a statement, Hur said that in a first wave of attacks Russia was using a "significant number of strike drones to overload Ukraine's air defence system and strike civilian targets". It added that this could be followed by massive missile strikes.

NEWS

Foreign

Ghana to repatriate hundreds of citizens from South Africa

Ghana said on Tuesday that it has initiated the process to evacuate about 300 of its citizens from South Africa following a wave of protests against foreigners.

President John Dramani Mahama approved the move to assist people who had complied with an advisory and registered with the country's High Commission in Pretoria.

The Ghanaian government said the evacuation exercise was aimed at ensuring the safety and welfare of citizens amid rising tensions and xenophobic attacks.

Nigeria has also expressed its concerns after a series of anti-immigrants protests in several cities across South Africa, as well as claims of assaults and intimidation.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has denied the country is xenophobic, saying the recent attacks on foreign nationals do not reflect the views of government or broader society.

In his weekly newsletter to the nation, he condemned the protests and criminal acts targeting foreigners, warning that no individual or group has the right to take the law into their own hands.

Acknowledging growing concern over undocumented migration, he said there was a need to "deal decisively" with illegal immigration but that this had to be done within the confines of the law.

"Undocumented migration places strain on healthcare, housing, and municipal services, particularly in poor communities," he said.

On Tuesday, South Africa's Constitutional Court ruled that a refugee cannot remain in the country and re-apply for asylum after being denied approval in a previous application.

The Department of Home Affairs welcomed the judgment, describing it as a significant victory against abuse of the asylum system.



MARCH AGAINST XENOPHOBIC:

People attend a march against xenophobic attacks in Johannesburg, South Africa, 23 April 2015.

Woman isolating on British island in South Pacific after hantavirus contact

A woman is isolating on the Pitcairn Islands, a remote British Overseas Territory in the South Pacific, after travelling on a hantavirus-hit cruise ship.

A local government spokesperson told the BBC the person "had contact with a hantavirus-exposed individual" but was "showing no signs of illness".

The UK foreign office said it was "aware of an individual from the MV Hondius who has travelled on to the Pitcairn Islands".

Officials said she was not a suspected case and the risk to the public was low.

The woman had flown from San Francisco on 7 May and travelled through the island of Tahiti and then Mangareva in French Polynesia, the French Polynesian government said.

No details have been released about when and where she left the cruise and travelled to the US.

Three people have died after travelling on the Dutch-flagged MV Hondius ship. Two of them were confirmed virus cases. The third had earlier developed symptoms and is believed to have been the first infected in the outbreak, but died before he could be tested.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the UN global health agency, has since confirmed nine cases, with two others suspected.

On Tuesday, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there was at that time "no sign" of a larger hantavirus outbreak after the evacuation of the last passengers from the ship a day earlier.

But he warned that "the situation could change" and there could be more confirmed virus cases.

Hantaviruses are usually carried by rodents, but human

transmission of the Andes strain - which the WHO believes some of the ship's passengers contracted in South America - is possible.

Symptoms can include fever, extreme fatigue, muscle aches, stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and shortness of breath.

The woman - who has not been publicly named - was currently isolating on Pitcairn, the only inhabited of the four volcanic islands of the British Overseas Territory.

The British foreign office told the BBC it was coordinating with the local authorities and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) "to manage the risks to the individual and the islanders".

UKHSA said the length of isolation for close contacts of cases, which those on the ship are considered to be, is 45 days.

It is not yet clear when the UK government or local authorities were made aware of the case.

Speaking to the BBC, the Pitcairn government spokesman said: "We are working closely with the health authorities and the UK government to manage the situation."

"The wellbeing of our community remains the top priority."

The Pitcairn Islands has a population of about 50 people and most of the residents are descendants of mutineers from the Royal Navy warship HMS Bounty who settled there in 1790.

Meanwhile, the French Polynesian government said the woman had transited through without notifying "territorial and national authorities". Authorities held an emergency meeting on Sunday and decided not to allow the woman now isolating on Pitcairn to re-enter French Polynesia.

President Macron faces backlash after summit outburst

French President Emmanuel Macron is facing backlash after he interrupted a panel at the Africa Forward Summit in Kenya to demand silence from the audience.

Macron stormed the stage to rebuke audience members for what he called a "total lack of respect," accusing them of disrupting speakers during a presentation by artists and young entrepreneurs. He had earlier described himself as a "Pan-Africanist" during a news conference.

The summit is meant to showcase France's new policy for the continent — a shift from a former colonial power seen as dominating to what Paris describes as a partnership of equals. On Tuesday, Macron announced a \$27 billion investment into various sectors in Africa, including energy, artificial

intelligence and agriculture.

Videos of Macron's heated intervention on Monday quickly spread across social media, drawing a mix of mockery, praise and criticism.

Appearing visibly frustrated by the noise in the room, Macron abruptly walked onto the stage and asked the speaker to hand him the microphone, saying he would "restore order."

Addressing the audience in English, he criticized attendees for talking over the speakers and creating disruptions during the session.

Some audience members applauded the intervention, but Macron also drew criticism over his response.

"Just imagine what would happen if an African leader did the same thing in America or Europe," said Thierno Mbaye, a

history student at a university in Senegal's capital, Dakar.

"He acted like a schoolteacher scolding children," Mbaye told The Associated Press.

The intervention also drew criticism in France.

"It's stronger than him: as soon as he sets foot on the African continent, he can't help but behave like a colonizer," Danièle Obono, a lawmaker for the hard-left party France Unbowed, said in a post on X.

Diplomatic and military setbacks in West Africa

The Africa Forward Summit, which is set to close on Tuesday with a declaration that is expected to be signed by all 30 heads of state, comes amid a fallout between France and its former colonies, mostly in West Africa.

France has long maintained a

colonial policy of economic, political and military sway dubbed Françafrique, which included keeping thousands of troops in the region it controlled.

After years of criticism from leaders and opposition parties in many West African countries over what they described as a demeaning and heavy-handed approach, France has withdrawn most of its troops from the region. It completed the withdrawal of troops from Senegal in July.

Macron had already faced a backlash ahead of the summit for claiming Sunday at news conference alongside Kenyan President William Ruto that "we are the true Pan-Africanists."

"We believe that Africa is a continent, and that this continent has an enormous amount to build," Macron said.

Epstein abused me while under house arrest, survivor tells US lawmakers

A survivor of Jeffrey Epstein's abuse has told how the late sex offender sexually abused her while he was under house arrest for soliciting prostitution from a minor.

Roza, who was recruited from Uzbekistan as a teenager by Epstein's associate and modelling agent Jean-Luc Brunel, spoke publicly for the first time alongside a number of victims in a field hearing that was organised by House Democrats.

She told the session that she was introduced to Epstein by Brunel in July 2009, was offered work by Epstein "to help me with my financial troubles", and he later subjected her to rape over a period of three years.

Democratic lawmaker Robert Garcia said the unofficial hearing was held in West Palm

Beach, Florida, because it was where Epstein's "crimes first came to light".

The hearing, which Garcia pointed out was also held in close proximity to US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence, was held by Democrats from the US House Oversight Committee and local Democratic members.

The committee, which has a Republican majority, is currently investigating the financier's crimes. Democratic members of the committee have focused on scrutinising the Trump administration's handling of the Epstein files.

The hearing carries no legal authority, but was planned with the intention of keeping the Epstein case in the spotlight.

Democratic lawmakers heard how Epstein and his ac-

complices evaded accountability for years, and how victims were repeatedly failed by the justice system.

Roza, whose first name was only given in the hearing, said she was 18 when she met the late Brunel in 2008 and "promised a modelling career beyond my dreams".

"Coming from a financially unstable background I was a perfect target for coercion," she added, during the tearful testimony.

By May 2009, she was in New York City on a visa, and in July she met Epstein at his house in West Palm Beach while he was under house arrest, Roza said.

Epstein then offered her a role at his Florida Science Foundation - where he had worked during an initial arrangement that allowed him to leave custody for up to 16

hours a day, six days a week, following his 2008 conviction.

"One day his masseuse called me into his room where I was molested for the first time by Jeffrey," Roza told the hearing. "For the following three years I was subject to ongoing rape."

Epstein died in a New York prison cell on 10 August 2019 as he awaited trial on sex trafficking charges.

His conviction in 2008 had been for soliciting prostitution from a minor - for which he was registered as a sex offender.

A report published by Democratic oversight committee members on Tuesday found that a controversial plea deal negotiated by Epstein's lawyer in 2008 enabled him to "continue his abuse and trafficking activities for almost another decade".



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FIFA U-20 World Cup: Falconets placed in Pot 2 ahead of FIFA U20 Women's World Cup

Head coach Moses Aduku and Team Administrator Kelechi Omeke will represent Nigeria women's national under-20 football team at Friday's draw ceremony for the 12th edition of the FIFA U-20 Women's World

Cup in Łódź, Poland.

The draw ceremony will take place at the EC1 Cultural Centre as anticipation builds ahead of the tournament, which is scheduled to run from September 5 to 27 across the Polish cities of Łódź, Katowice,

Sosnowiec and Bielsko-Biala.

Nigeria secured qualification alongside Benin Republic, Ghana and Tanzania as Africa's four representatives at the 24-team tournament. Nigeria sports events.

All qualified teams have been divided into four pots of six teams each ahead of the draw, which will determine the six groups for the competition.

The 2026 edition is expected to feature a number of historic moments, including the participation of six debutants — hosts Poland, Portugal, New Caledonia, Ecuador, Tanzania and Benin Republic.

Meanwhile, Germany — runners-up to Nigeria in the finals of the 2010 and 2014

tournaments — will miss the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup for the first time in history.

Europe will be represented by Poland, France, Italy, England, Portugal and Spain. Asia's representatives include China, South Korea, Japan and North Korea.

Americas, Mexico, United States and Costa Rica will represent North and Central America, while Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina and Colombia qualified from South America. Oceania's representatives are New Zealand and New Caledonia.

Nigeria's Falconets, one of the tournament's ever-present teams, have been placed in Pot 2 alongside the United States,



FALCONETS OF NIGERIA

National Sports Commission reaffirms commitment to supporting elite athletes, from 'Prospect to Podium'

The Director General of the National Sports Commission, NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade has reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to ensuring that Nigeria maximises the full potentials and qualities of its athletes both home and abroad for better podium placement at international competitions.

The Sports Commission DG re-emphasized this when he paid a visit to the home of teenage track sensation, Annabelle Fasuba in the United Kingdom.

Olopade said it is the desire of the Commission to have as many young Nigerian athletes in the Diaspora to continually identify with the country's Sports project, and represent Nigeria at major International sports meets in a bid to revive and re-energise the fortunes of the nation as a major Sporting Country.

"Nigeria wants you and will make sure we give you all the support you need to get to the very top in your career".

"This is one of the core objectives of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, through the Renewed Hope mandate, to revive and give an enabling environment to the country's sons and daughters in every corner of the World to put on the green and white colours", The DG stated.

Chairman of the NSC's Di-

aspora Talent Committee, Dr "Tunde Adelakun, said "where we will rewrite the history books is in our commitment not only to see you excel in sport, but to also be on the look out for you way outside of sport, making sure you are doing well in academia and preserving your future after sports by making sure you have a sound education".



Football Politics: Morocco files CAS defense in Senegal appeal over AFCON 2025 final

Reports suggesting that the Royal Moroccan Football Federation failed to meet the legal deadline to respond to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) have been dismissed by Moroccan football authorities, who confirmed that the federation has officially filed its defense in the ongoing dispute over the

2025 Africa Cup of Nations final.

The case before the Court of Arbitration for Sport stems from an appeal lodged by the Senegalese Football Federation challenging CAF's decision to uphold Morocco's AFCON 2025 title following Senegal's withdrawal from the final against the Atlas Lions.

According to Moroccan

outlet Almountakhab, sources within the federation rejected claims that Morocco missed the deadline to submit its legal response. The sources maintained that all procedures and timelines were respected in line with applicable legal regulations.

Federation officials explained that the original submission deadline fell on a weekend, which automatically extended the filing period to the next official working day. Morocco's legal documents were therefore submitted on Monday, May 11, 2026.

The federation said the submission was intended to strengthen the legitimacy of Morocco's legal position while countering allegations of procedural irregularities that could influence the CAS proceedings.



MOROCCO AND SENEGAL

African Cycling Championship: Team Nigeria wins 16 medals in Abuja Cycling Championship

Team Nigeria delivered an impressive performance at the 2026 Confederation of African Cycling Para-Track and Track African Championships, claiming a total of 16 medals at the ongoing competition in Abuja.

The championship, taking place at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium Velodrome, has attracted top cyclists from across Africa, including participants from Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Algeria and hosts Nigeria.

After two days of competition, Nigeria topped the medals table with nine gold, five silver and two bronze medals, finishing ahead of some of the continent's established cycling nations.

Egypt currently occupy sec-

ond position on the standings with 14 medals, while Kenya are third with nine medals.

South Africa and Algeria complete the top five on the medals table as the championship continues in Abuja.



NVBF unveils 2026 National Division One and Two league calendar

The Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF) has unveiled the schedule for the first phase of the 2026 National Division One and Two League for male and female teams, with the competition set to hold from May 23 to June 7, 2026, in Abuja.

According to a statement released by the federation on Tuesday, the championship will take place at the indoor sports hall of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Package B.

The tournament is expected to feature volleyball clubs, sports institutions, military formations, and paramilitary

teams from across the country as they compete for honours in the national league.

The NVBF stated that the competition, approved by its League Management Committee, is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the structure, competitiveness, and grassroots development of volleyball in Nigeria. Cycling championship tickets

As contained in the official programme, participating teams are expected to arrive in Abuja on May 23, while the technical meeting is scheduled for May 24 ahead of the commencement of matches.

Ismaily relegated for first time in 68 years

Egyptian giants Ismaily SC have been officially relegated to the Egyptian second division for the first time in their 68-year history.

The historic club from the city of Ismailia suffered a 2-1 defeat to Wadi Degla on Wednesday night, confirming their relegation after a disappointing campaign.

The result marks one of the darkest moments in the history of Egyptian football, with Ismaily one of the country's most respected clubs unable to avoid

the drop despite their rich pedigree. Football news updates

Founded in 1924, Ismaily are widely regarded as one of the traditional powerhouses of Egyptian football and remain the first North African club to win the prestigious CAF Champions League, achieving the feat in 1969.

Their relegation has sparked emotional reactions among supporters and football followers across Africa, bringing an end to the club's long stay in the Egyptian top flight.



EGYPTIAN GIANTS ISMAILY SC

Sports



World Cup: Ouahbi steps up Morocco's World Cup build-up with three warm-up games

With less than a month to the start of the FIFA World Cup, Morocco have lined up three warm-up matches as

new coach Mohamed Ouahbi seeks more time to fine-tune his squad ahead of the global showpiece in the United States. The North Africans, who

stunned the football world by reaching the semi-finals at the last World Cup in Qatar in 2022, appointed Ouahbi in March following the resignation of Walid Regragui.

Since taking over, Ouahbi has handled only two matches, drawing against Ecuador and defeating Paraguay as he began shaping his team for the tournament.

According to the Moroccan Football Federation, the Atlas Lions will open their preparations with a closed-door friendly against Burundi on May 26 at the team's training centre in Sale.

They will then face Madagascar on June 2 in Rabat in what is expected to serve as the team's official send-off before

departure for the World Cup. Soccer

After arriving in the United States, where Morocco's base camp will be located in Basking Ridge, the team will conclude their preparations with a clash against Norway on June 7 in New York City.

Reports indicate that Morocco will begin camping on May 22, although the final squad is not expected to be announced until a week later.

Morocco have been drawn in Group C of the World Cup, where they will open their campaign against Brazil on June 13 in New York before taking on Scotland in Boston on June 19. Their final group match will be against Haiti on June 24 in Atlanta



MOROCCO TEAM

Alex Iwobi has provided an encouraging update on his recovery from injury, boosting hopes for both Fulham F.C. and Nigeria head coach Eric Chelle ahead of the Super Eagles' upcoming international friendlies against Poland and Portugal.

According to Daily Post, Iwobi sustained the injury during Fulham's 1-0 defeat to Brentford F.C. at the Community Stadium in April, forcing him off the pitch and initially sparking fears that he could miss the remainder of the season.

The midfielder subsequently sat out several Premier League fixtures, including matches against Aston Villa F.C., AFC Bournemouth, and Arsenal F.C., with Fulham struggling for consistency during his absence.

However, the latest update from the player has eased concerns over the severity of the injury. Speaking about his rehabilitation progress, Iwobi revealed that he is now able to walk again, although he admitted he is still experiencing some discomfort. He also expressed relief that the issue is not a recurring injury.

Fulham manager Marco Silva had previously indicated that the injury was not expected to keep the Nigerian midfielder sidelined for an extended period, and Iwobi's latest comments appear to support that assessment. Nigeria sports events

Iwobi remains one of Fulham's most influential players,

Super Eagles handed major boost as Alex Iwobi nears return from injury

valued for his ability to dictate tempo, transition play through midfield, and support attacking movements. His absence has coincided with a dip in form for the London club during a demanding phase of the season.

For Nigeria, the midfielder's recovery is equally significant. Under Eric Chelle, Iwobi is regarded as one of the team's most experienced and dependable performers, often serving as a creative focal point in midfield.



MOROCCO TEAM

Zimbabwe suffer injury setback before Unity Cup opener against Nigeria

Zimbabwe international defender Brendan Galloway is expected to miss the upcoming Unity Cup after failing to recover in time from injury, dealing an early setback to the Warriors ahead of the invitation tournament in London.

The experienced left-back had been tipped to play a key role for Zimbabwe during the competition but has now been ruled out after medical assessments confirmed he would not regain fitness in time for the tournament.

Galloway's absence comes in the first assignment for newly appointed Zimbabwe head coach Kaitano Tembo, who recently took charge of the national team.

Zimbabwe are scheduled to face Nigeria in the opening semi-final of the Unity Cup at The Valley on May 26, with the winner progressing to the final. Nigerian sports history

The tournament is expected to provide Zimbabwe's technical team with an important opportunity to evaluate player combinations and assess both locally-based and foreign-based talent ahead of future international commitments.



SUPER EAGLES OF NIGERIA

CAF African Summit: Morocco realised over two billion dollars for hosting AFCON 2025

CAF President Patrice Motsepe has revealed that more than \$2 billion was generated for the Moroccan economy during the last edition of the Africa Cup of Nations hosted by Morocco.

Speaking at the Africa Forward Summit in Kenya, Motsepe highlighted the massive global impact of the tournament,

describing it as one of the most successful editions in the history of African football.

According to the CAF president, the competition attracted about 2.5 billion television viewers worldwide, while also recording 6.2 billion digital interactions across various platforms. He added that 118 countries were connected to the tournament.

Motsepe said the tournament's success also had a significant economic impact on Morocco, with approximately \$2 billion injected into the country's economy through tourism, hospitality, broadcasting, and other commercial activities.

The South African football administrator also praised Morocco's historic performance at the

2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, where the Atlas Lions became the first African nation to reach the semi-finals of the competition. Football coaching resources

He stated that Morocco's achievement made the entire African continent proud and demonstrated the growing strength of African football on the global stage.



EL HADJI DIOUF

Court sentences Senegal Legend Diouf to prison

A court in Dakar has handed former Senegal international El Hadji Diouf a one-year suspended prison sentence over a child abandonment case linked to unpaid child support.

The former football star was found guilty after failing to meet his financial obligations towards his child, according to the court ruling delivered in

the Senegalese capital.

In addition to the suspended sentence, Diouf was ordered to pay 10 million CFA francs in damages.

Diouf, a former Senegal captain, enjoyed a successful football career with clubs across Europe and was part of the Senegal team that reached the quarter-finals of the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

Athletics: Nigeria's Ogunsakin set for French Open Junior Qualifiers

Nigerian teenage sensation Seun Ogunsakin has officially been listed in the qualifying rounds of the junior event at the French Open scheduled to take place in Paris.

The development marks a major milestone for Nigerian tennis, as Ogunsakin is set to become the first Nigerian player in decades to feature in the junior competition at Roland Garros. Nigeria sports events

The youngster's inclusion in the qualifiers is seen as another significant step in his growing career, following a series of impressive performances on the junior circuit.

The French Open junior championship is regarded as one of the most prestigious platforms for emerging tennis talents across the world, with several top professional stars having passed through the tournament

African Championships: Amusan, Adaobi qualify for Women's 100m hurdles final

Nigeria's sprint hurdler Tobi Amusan delivered an impressive performance to qualify for the women's 100m hurdles final at the African Athletics Championships in Accra.

Amusan clocked an unofficial time of 12.82 seconds to win her heat and finish as the overall leader heading into the final.

Fellow Nigerian athlete

Adaobi Tabugbo also secured qualification for the final after finishing third in her heat.

Her time was enough to earn one of the available fastest loser spots.

The duo will now represent Nigeria in the final as the country continues its strong showing at the continental championships in Accra



TOBI AMUSAN

FEATURE



2027: The Rivers political crisis in focus

RAYMOND OSOGBE

The political crisis in Rivers State remains one of the most contentious episodes in Nigeria's democratic history. What began as a dispute between political allies escalated into a high-stakes battle for power, influence, and control of the oil-rich state. As Nigeria approaches the 2027 general elections, the fallout from the Rivers crisis continues to shape national political discourse.

At the center of the conflict are Governor Siminalayi Fubara and his predecessor, Nyesom Wike. Fubara emerged as governor in 2023 with Wike's backing, but the relationship soured over questions of authority and control within the state's political structure. The rift split the Rivers State House of Assembly into rival factions and fueled instability across the state.

Tensions deepened when lawmakers aligned with Wike initiated impeachment proceedings against Governor Fubara. Political violence, protests, and allegations of abuse of power followed. The demolition of the Rivers State House of Assembly complex further inflamed the situation and raised serious constitutional questions nationwide.

In March 2025, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers State. He suspended Governor Fubara, his depu-



NYESOM WIKE

GOVERNOR SIMINALAYI FUBARA

ty, and members of the State House of Assembly for six months, and appointed retired Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas as sole administrator. The federal government justified the move as necessary to restore order and protect critical oil infrastructure in the Niger Delta.

The declaration drew sharp criticism from legal experts, civil society

groups, and opposition politicians. Many argued that suspending elected officials undermined democratic norms and federalism. Others contended that the intervention averted a descent into chaos. The episode exposed the fragility of Nigeria's political institutions and the enduring influence of godfatherism in governance.

Public reaction revealed deep na-

tional divisions. On social media and in political forums, some blamed Wike for interfering in Rivers State affairs, while others accused Fubara of mismanaging the political structure that brought him to power. The debate also reflected growing anxiety about democratic backsliding and the potential for increased political manipulation ahead of 2027.

Economically, the crisis dented investor confidence in Rivers State, a cornerstone of Nigeria's oil production. Pipeline vandalism, fears of instability, and governance uncertainty disrupted economic activity and raised concerns among local and international investors. Analysts warned that prolonged instability could depress national oil output and reduce government revenue.

Although President Tinubu later initiated reconciliation efforts, political tensions persisted. Meetings involving Wike, Fubara, and key Rivers political actors aimed to restore peace and unity, but trust remained fragile.

As the 2027 elections draw near, the Rivers crisis stands as a cautionary tale about the dangers of political godfatherism, weak institutions, and the struggle for control. It underscores the urgent need for dialogue, constitutional fidelity, and good governance. For democracy to thrive, leaders must prioritize public interest over personal ambition and factional rivalry.

In conclusion, the Rivers political crisis is more than a feud between two politicians. It reflects broader structural challenges facing Nigerian democracy. The events in Rivers will continue to shape political alignments, governance debates, and electoral strategies as the country prepares for another pivotal democratic transition in 2027.

Climate and Energy: Nigeria's tightrope between growth and net zero

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

Nigeria faces a unique climate dilemma. It is one of the world's top oil producers, yet over 80 million Nigerians lack access to electricity. The country has pledged to reach net zero by 2060, but 90% of its export earnings still come from hydrocarbons. How Nigeria navigates this tension will shape both its economy and its climate credibility.

THE ENERGY ACCESS GAP

Despite being Africa's largest economy, Nigeria generates less than 5,000 MW of usable electricity for over 220 million people. South Africa, with a third of the population, generates over 50,000 MW. The gap is filled by generators, which cost households and businesses an estimated \$14 billion annually in fuel and maintenance.

This energy deficit stifles productivity. Small businesses can't scale. Hospitals struggle with power outages. Students study by kerosene lamps.

The irony is that Nigeria flares over 300 million cubic feet of natural gas daily, enough to power much of the country if captured and used.

CLIMATE COMMITMENTS VS. ECONOMIC REALITY

At COP26, Nigeria committed to net zero by 2060 and to end routine gas flaring by 2030. The Energy Transition Plan outlines a shift toward gas as a transition fuel, with renewables scaling up to 30% of the mix by 2030. The plan requires \$410 billion in investment through 2060.

But financing is the bottleneck. Global investors are increasingly wary of fossil fuel projects, yet renewable projects in Nigeria face risks from currency volatility, tariff shortfalls, and policy inconsistency. The result is a financing gap that neither public budgets nor private capital have closed.

GLOBAL CONTEXT AND LEVERAGE

Nigeria's situation mirrors that of many developing countries: expected to cut emissions while lifting millions

out of energy poverty. The global debate is shifting from "stop oil" to "stop unabated emissions." For Nigeria, this opens space to argue for gas as a transition fuel and to demand climate finance that matches the scale of the challenge.

The Loss and Damage Fund agreed at COP28 could be a vehicle, but disbursement mechanisms remain unclear. Carbon markets offer another

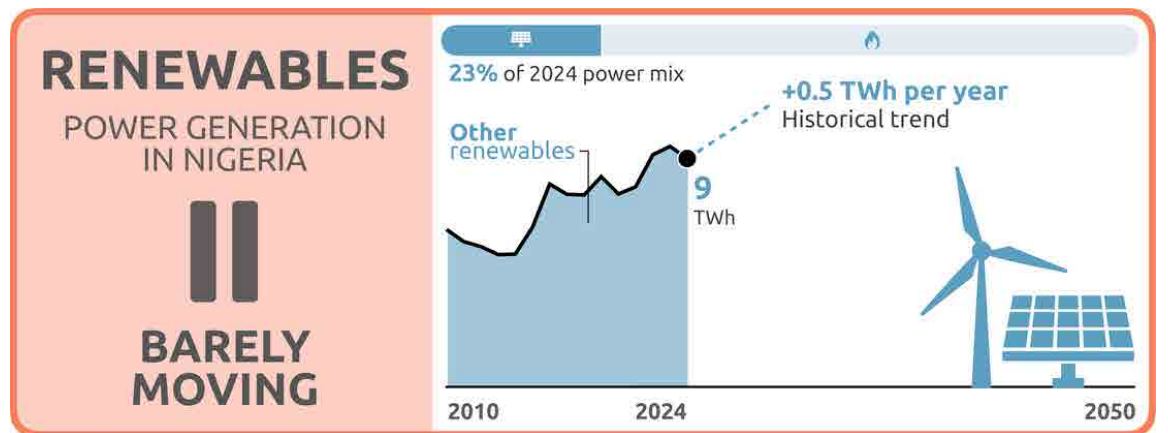
avenue, but Nigeria needs credible data and governance to participate.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Three shifts are urgent. First, fix the power sector's commercial viability by improving tariff collection and reducing losses. Second, scale decentralized renewables for rural areas where grid extension is uneconomical. Third,

capture and monetize flared gas for domestic use and export.

Nigeria cannot afford to choose between growth and climate action. The challenge is to use gas responsibly to expand energy access now, while building the renewable capacity that will power the economy in 2050. How well it manages that tightrope will influence Africa's energy future.



climateactiontracker.org

May 2025 update

Sources: Climate Action Tracker, Ember, Global Energy Monitor