

# Ogheghe residents hail Okpebholo over road project

● **Say intervention restoring hope, boosting business activities**

Residents of Ogheghe community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State have commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for the ongoing road construction project in the area, describing it as a long-awaited intervention that

is already improving livelihoods and easing movement. The commendation came during the governor's unscheduled visit to the community to assess the level of work

done on the road project. Residents, traders and pedestrians who spoke with journalists expressed satisfaction with the pace and quality of work, noting that the construc-

tion had renewed hope among residents after years of hardship caused by the poor state of the road. According to them, the once dusty and waterlogged road

had become a nightmare for motorists, traders and schoolchildren, especially during the rainy season when movement within the community was often difficult.

A trader in the area, Victor Merit, said the road construction had started attracting more customers to the market as access to the community improved.

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# The Nigerian OBSERVER

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# No Ebola case in Nigeria —FG

● **Intensifies nat'l preparedness**

**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has reassured Nigerians that no case of Ebola Virus Disease has been confirmed in the country, even as it steps up surveillance and preparedness measures nationwide in response to recent outbreaks in parts of Africa.

The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, gave the assurance in a statement issued on Wednesday in Abuja by the Assistant Director of

Information and Public Relations, Mr Ado Bako.

Pate explained that although Nigeria remains free of Ebola, the government has activated precautionary health measures following reported outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, aimed at strengthening national health security and preventing any possible importation of the disease.

He said surveillance systems had been reinforced across the country, with key health agencies, including the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control

and Prevention (NCDC) and Port Health Services, placed on heightened alert to monitor developments and respond swiftly to any suspected case.

According to him, the ministry is working in close collaboration with the World Health Organisation and regional health authorities to ensure early detection, rapid response, and effective coordination in the event of any public health threat.

"While Nigeria currently has no confirmed case of Ebola Virus Disease, the Federal Government is taking all nec-

essary proactive measures to strengthen national preparedness, surveillance and coordination mechanisms," he said.

Pate noted that ongoing interventions include enhanced disease surveillance, improved monitoring activities nationwide, and strengthened screening procedures at all points of entry into the country.

He added that health declaration protocols have also been reinforced in partnership with Port Health Services to minimise the risk of importation.

He further disclosed that coordination with state ministries of health and other stakeholders had been intensified to

ensure a unified and effective response structure across all levels of government.

The minister said laboratory preparedness and diagnostic capacity had also been upgraded to enable prompt detection and confirmation of any suspected cases, while infection prevention and control measures were being reinforced in health facilities nationwide.

He also said public awareness campaigns and community engagement efforts had been strengthened to keep citizens informed and alert without causing panic.

Pate urged Nigerians to remain calm, avoid misinformation, and adhere to basic preventive measures such as regular handwashing and avoiding contact with bodily fluids of persons showing symptoms of illness.

He advised that any unusual illness should be promptly reported to the nearest health facility for immediate investigation and medical attention, adding that healthcare workers have been directed to maintain a high index of suspicion, strictly follow infection prevention protocols, isolate suspected cases where necessary, and report through established public health channels.

He reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to safeguarding public health through coordinated preparedness, surveillance, and rapid response systems across the country.

Ebola Virus Disease is a severe and often fatal illness transmitted through direct contact with infected bodily fluids.



**PROJECTS INSPECTION:**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (middle), flanked by State Chairman, All Progressives Congress (APC), Emperor Jarette Tenebe (right), and the Special Adviser, Project Monitoring to the Governor, Engr. Phoebe Williams-Bello, during unscheduled projects inspection at Ogheghe community in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of the State

## NSCDC trains over 200 Edo personnel

● **Pushes stronger security ties with tertiary institutions**

**BENIN CITY**

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has intensified its national security strategy with specialised training for more than 200 personnel in Edo State, while also strengthening collaboration with tertiary institutions in Kogi State to improve campus safety and intelligence-driven policing.

In Benin City, the Edo State Command of the Corps trained over 200 officers on specialised courses designed to enhance

operational effectiveness and security response.

The training covered VIP protection, disaster management, public safety, security intelligence, crime prevention and correctional administration.

Speaking during the certificate presentation ceremony on Wednesday in Benin, the State Commandant, Mr Saidi Akin-tayo, said continuous training and retraining of personnel remained essential to effective security operations.

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# Edo Pilgrims arrive Madinah as 2026 Hajj journey begins

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

## SAUDI ABIA

The Edo State contingent for the 2026 Hajj exercise has arrived safely in Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, marking the beginning of the spiritual journey for 95 intending pilgrims from the state.

The pilgrims, made up of 45 females and 50 males, travelled aboard an Air Peace flight, aircraft number P4-7938, alongside other Nigerian pilgrims, including members of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

The flight departed Lagos on Tuesday, 19 May 2026, at about 1:00 p.m. and landed in Madinah after a smooth and uneventful journey.

Leading the Edo delegation is the Amirul Hajj, HRH Mallam Ali D. Sulayman, the Oghiea-

ga of Ivbies, who was accompanied by officials of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, led by the Chairman, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, and the Executive Secretary, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkibir.

Speaking on arrival, HRH Mallam Ali D. Sulayman expressed gratitude to Allah for the safe journey, urging the pilgrims to uphold peace and discipline throughout the exercise.

"We thank Allah for a safe trip. Let us maintain the peace we started from Nigeria so that Allah will grant us Hajj Mabruur," he said.

The pilgrims' welfare board also expressed appreciation to God for their safe arrival and commended the orderly conduct of the intending pilgrims during the journey.

Officials further urged the

pilgrims to remain good ambassadors of Edo State and Nigeria by strictly adhering to

the rules guiding the Hajj exercise and dedicating themselves to prayers for the state and the

nation.

Their arrival in Madinah marks the commencement of

preparations for the main Hajj rites scheduled to take place in Makkah in the coming days.



### ASSEMBLY PRIMARY ELECTION:

L-R: Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (left); Hon. Sunday Aghedo, member representing Ovia South-West in the Edo State House of Assembly (EDHA), and Hon. Harrison Okpamen, before the Assembly primary election in Iguobazuwa, Ovia South West LGA. PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

## Ogheghe residents hail Okpebholo...

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He said residents had suffered for years due to the deplorable condition of the road, particularly during heavy rainfall when it became nearly impassable.

Another resident, Mr Monday Orugbe, described Governor Okpebholo as a blessing to Edo State, noting that the road was previously in a terrible condition before the intervention.

He said the ongoing construction had brought relief to residents and expressed opti-

mism that the project would improve transportation and economic activities in the area.

Pedestrians and schoolchildren also welcomed the development, describing the project as a major relief that would improve safety and reduce accidents.

The residents praised the governor for what they described as his commitment to infrastructural development across Edo State, saying the project reflected the administration's resolve to improve living conditions.

## NSCDC trains over 200...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

He explained that the programmes had significantly improved the command's operational efficiency, intelligence gathering, disaster response capacity, anti-vandal activities and conflict management across the state.

"No security organisation can effectively discharge its mandate without continuous capacity building and exposure of personnel to modern security techniques and global best practices," Akintayo said.

He added that the command would continue investing in human capital development to ensure officers remained professionally equipped to tackle emerging security threats.

Akintayo also commended the Commandant General of the Corps, Ahmed Audi, for reforms and leadership initiatives that had enhanced professionalism, operational effectiveness and personnel welfare across the country.

He assured residents of sustained proactive security operations and closer collaboration with other security agencies to enhance safety in Edo State.

Meanwhile, in Kogi State, the NSCDC has called for stronger collaboration with tertiary institutions as part of efforts to curb insecurity in schools and safeguard critical academic environments.

The Kogi State Commandant,

Mr Ebenezer Aletan, made the call on Wednesday while hosting the Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University Lokoja, Prof. Gbenga Ibileye, during a courtesy visit to the NSCDC State Headquarters in Lokoja.

Aletan described tertiary institutions as critical national assets requiring adequate protection, assuring the university management of the Corps' commitment to ensuring safety on campus.

He also highlighted the establishment of the National Safe School Response Coordination Centre by the NSCDC Commandant-General, Ahmed Audi, noting that it was aimed at strengthening the safety of students and educational facilities across the country.

According to him, regular engagement with students, lecturers and other stakeholders within the school environment remains essential for effective intelligence gathering and improved security response.

Earlier, Prof. Ibileye said the visit was aimed at strengthening existing collaboration between the university and the Corps, noting that the strategic location of the institution required increased security presence to ensure safety and orderliness within the university environment.

The visit featured an exchange of plaques between both institutions as a symbol of renewed partnership.

## Okpebholo nominates Jeffery Iriabekhai as Commissioner-designate

### BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo has approved the nomination of Mr Iriabekhai Kayode Jeffery as a commissioner-designate for Edo State.

The nomination was an-

nounced in a statement by the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor.

According to the statement, Jeffery's name will be forwarded to the Edo State House of Assembly for consideration and confirmation.

The government described

Jeffery as a dedicated and goal-oriented professional with qualifications in accounting, noting that he is recognised for his commitment to organisational growth and excellence.

It added that he had consistently contributed positively

towards achieving corporate goals and delivering results in responsibilities assigned to him.

If confirmed by the House of Assembly, Jeffery will join the Edo State Executive Council as part of Governor Okpebholo's administration.

## Edo NUJ threatens legal action over alleged ₦100m bribery claim

### ● Demands retraction, apology from online platform within 48 hours

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has strongly denied allegations that it collected ₦100 million from the Edo State Government ahead of the Edo South Senatorial District primaries, describing the claim as false, malicious and defamatory.

In a statement issued on Wednesday in Benin City, the council condemned a publication by an online platform identified as "Standard Daily Press," which alleged that the union received the money before the senatorial primaries.

The statement, signed by Edo

NUJ Chairman, Comrade Festus Alenke, and Secretary, Andy Egbon, dismissed the allegation as a "criminal lie" allegedly orchestrated to tarnish the image of the union and its leadership.

According to the council, the individual behind the publication is not a practising journalist, nor a registered member of the NUJ.

The union claimed it had verified that the author lacked press accreditation and did not operate within the ethics and standards of journalism, alleging that the publication was the handiwork of "a quack and political hatchet man" using an online platform for blackmail and defamation.

The NUJ maintained that it neither collected, requested nor discussed any financial transaction with the Edo State Government in relation to the Edo South Senatorial primaries, insisting that the allegation was entirely fabricated.

"The allegation is 100 percent false. Edo NUJ did not collect, request, or discuss ₦100 million or any amount from the Edo State Government. We challenge those behind the publication to produce evidence," the statement said.

The council further described the report as an act of blackmail, rather than journalism, arguing that the publication was intended to intimidate

and damage the reputation of a legitimate professional body.

It warned that spreading false information through digital platforms could amount to offences under relevant laws, including provisions of the Cybercrimes Act and the Criminal Code.

The Edo NUJ leadership consequently demanded an immediate retraction of the publication and an unreserved public apology to be published across all platforms operated by Standard Daily Press with the same prominence as the original report.

It also demanded the disclosure of the identity of the writer and alleged sponsors of the publication.

## Idahosa declares "No opposition in Edo" as Aghedo clinches Ovia S'West APC ticket

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has declared that there is "no opposition in Edo State" following the All Progressives Congress (APC) primary election for Ovia South West Constituency ahead of the Edo State House of Assembly (EDHA) poll,

where Hon. Sunday Aghedo emerged victorious.

Aghedo, the incumbent lawmaker, secured a total of 7,372 votes in the primary conducted on Wednesday at the Iguobazuwa Town Hall collation centre.

The Returning Officer for the exercise, Mr Frank Adegbudo, announced that out of 10,044 registered members,

7,719 were accredited to participate in the election.

He said other contestants recorded 86 votes for Mr Oyomire Kenneth Idahosa and 261 votes for Mr Adesotu Kelvin, while Aghedo recorded a decisive lead with 7,372 votes.

Declaring the outcome, Adegbudo described the exercise as orderly and transparent.

Reacting to the result, Idahosa

commended party members in Ovia South West for turning out in large numbers to choose their candidate, stressing that the state was politically united under the leadership of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

"There is no opposition in Edo State with Governor Monday Okpebholo working across the three senatorial districts," he said.

# Lagos records 328,362 new voters as INEC begins final CVR phase

## LAGOS

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said that Lagos State recorded a total of 328,362 new registrants during phases one and two of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in the state, Ayobami Salami, disclosed this on Wednesday during a stakeholders' engagement on Phase

III of the CVR exercise held at the INEC State Collation Centre, Sabo-Yaba.

Salami said that 154,726 of the new registrants, representing 47 per cent, were males, while 173,636, representing 53 per cent, were females.

He added that about 63 per cent of the new registrants were between ages 18 and 39, while 21 per cent were within ages 40 and 49.

According to him, statistics indicate that about 84 per cent

of fresh registrants in the state are below 50 years of age.

The REC described the ongoing Phase III of the CVR exercise as the final phase of voter registration before the 2027 General Elections.

Salami said: "During phases one and two of the exercise, Lagos State recorded a total of 328,362 new registrants.

"This Phase III of the CVR exercise, which commenced on Monday, May 11, 2026 and will end on July 10, 2026, rep-

resents the final phase of voter registration for the current electoral cycle.

"It is therefore important that no eligible voter is left behind", he said.

Salami said the commission had retained the online pre-registration option to ease the process and reduce pressure at registration centres.

"For clarity, eligibility for registration requires that an applicant must be a citizen of Nigeria, must be at least

18 years old, must be ordinarily resident in the area of registration, and must not be under any legal incapacity as prescribed by the Constitution and the Electoral Act.

"New registrations must, however, be completed physically at designated registration centres," he said.

The REC said the commission had introduced targeted intervention exercises in areas experiencing congestion and accessibility challenges during previous CVR exercises.

"INEC Lagos State is mindful of some challenges experienced in some Local Government Areas during previous CVR exercises.

"In response, the commission introduced targeted in-

tervention exercises in such LGAs, as well as mega CVR intervention exercises across the three senatorial districts, thereby bringing registration closer to the citizens.

"The results from these initiatives are encouraging and similar intervention measures will be sustained during this final phase to further expand access and encourage greater participation," he said.

Salami said registration services would continue uninterrupted at INEC state offices in all the 20 Local Government Area offices throughout the exercise.

According to him, CVR exercise remains the foundation upon which credible elections are built.



## COUNTING VOTES:

Shegun Arudoye (right), Returning Officer for Ovia South-West constituency, Edo State House of Assembly primary election, counting votes during the primary election in Iguobazuwa. Photo: Moses Oboh

## Kaduna Speaker, Liman Tahiru, emerges Makera consensus candidate through affirmation

### KADUNA

The Speaker of the Kaduna State House of Assembly, Liman Tahiru, has emerged the consensus candidate for the Makera State Constituency seat through affirmation by party members and stakeholders.

The Returning Officer, Ezekiel Gode, confirmed the affirmation during the exercise attended by party leaders, electoral stakeholders, and supporters.

Gode said the affirmation followed the adoption of Tahiru as the sole consensus candi-

date for the constituency.

According to him, all the voting areas affirmed Tahiru's candidature in line with the directive on the adoption of a consensus candidate.

"Having received all the affirmation results from the five voting areas and following the fact that no other candidate contested except Tahiru, I hereby declare him as the returned and affirmed candidate for the Makera constituency House of Assembly seat," he said.

He added that the declaration was made in accordance with the provisions and guidelines of the Electoral Act.

## FG, stakeholders back FAO on deforestation-free finance

### LAGOS

The Federal Government and key stakeholders have reaffirmed their support for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-led initiative to promote deforestation-free finance in Nigeria.

The commitment was made on Wednesday at a two-day workshop organised by FAO in Lagos with the theme: "Advancing Deforestation-Free Finance in Nigeria's Banking Sector: From Roadmap to Implementation."

The workshop was convened under the Global Environment Facility-7 Food Systems, Land

Use and Restoration Impact Programme (FOLUR), funded by the Global Environment Facility and implemented by FAO in collaboration with national partners.

The programme seeks to promote integrated landscape management, sustainable food systems, biodiversity conservation and restoration of degraded ecosystems, particularly within cocoa and oil palm-producing landscapes in Nigeria.

Deforestation-free finance refers to investment, lending and capital allocation practices that ensure financial resources do not contribute to deforestation, forest degradation or ecosystem conversion.

In his opening remarks, the FAO Representative in Nigeria and to Economic Community of West African States, Dr Hussein Gadain, said the workshop was aimed at moving deforestation-free finance in Nigeria from dialogue to implementation.

"Deforestation-free finance is not only an environmental imperative, it is increasingly becoming an economic and market necessity.

"Global buyers, investors and consumers are demanding greater transparency and sustainability in commodity supply chains.

"Financial institutions that adapt proactively will be bet-

ter positioned to manage risks, unlock investment opportunities and strengthen long-term competitiveness," Gadain said.

He said Nigeria had the potential to become a regional leader in sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural finance, especially in the cocoa and oil palm sectors.

According to him, FAO, through the FOLUR programme and other interventions, will continue to support Nigeria in strengthening sustainable commodity value chains, integrated landscape management, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and sustainable agricultural finance systems.

## Atiku appears before ADC screening panel, promises robust security reforms

### ABUJA

Former Vice-President Abubakar Atiku on Wednesday appeared before the African Democratic Congress (ADC) presidential screening panel, pledging to tackle insecurity nationwide.

A statement issued by Atiku's Senior Special Assistant on Public Communication, Mr Phrank Shaibu, after the exercise described the engagement as beyond routine party procedures.

It said that the exercise provided the former vice-president an opportunity to present practical solutions aimed at rescuing Nigeria from economic stagnation and security challenges.

The statement quoted Atiku as expressing concern over mass unemployment, institutional decline and persistent insecurity, which, he said, had exposed citizens to kidnappings, killings and violent attacks.

He said that Nigeria could not continue on its current path

where hardship persisted, businesses collapsed and investor confidence declined because of uncertain economic policies.

Atiku stated that his economic blueprint would focus on job creation, private sector expansion, fiscal discipline, stable macro-economic management and attracting sustainable investments into Nigeria.

He said that his security agenda would prioritise intelligence-driven operations, improved inter-agency collaboration, decen-

tralised security structures and decisive actions against criminal activities across the country.

"At this defining moment in our national life, Nigeria does not need experiments. It needs tested leadership and courage to make necessary national decisions," he said.

The presidential aspirant reaffirmed his commitment to building a secure, united and prosperous Nigeria where citizens could live peacefully and pursue opportunities with dignity.

## APC Primary: Ogun Rep. raises alarm over alleged threat to life

### ABUJA

Rep. Adesola Ayoola-Elegbeji of Ikenne, Sagamu, and Remo North Federal Constituency has raised alarm over alleged threat to her life following the APC primary elections in Ogun.

Ayoola-Elegbeji raised the alarm in a statement on Wednesday in reaction to a viral video of a group of young boys in Sagamu.

The lawmaker said the boys in the video threatened to end her life if she did not leave the town.

Ayoola-Elegbeji described the threat as worrisome, adding that it was at variance with democratic values.

She called on the appropriate authorities, especially the security agencies and party leaders in the state, to take the matter seriously.

"This video is a threat against me, asking me to leave the town or else I am not safe.

"I have informed the Nigerian Police Force and DSS in my area about the situation," she said.

Ayoola-Elegbeji said, as a peace-loving person, she had consistently stood for peace,

unity, fairness and issue-based politics.

She therefore wondered why an election could not be conducted without intimidation, violence or unrest.

The lawmaker said that political ambition should not be pursued at the expense of human lives, safety and the long-standing harmony associated with Remo Federal Constituency.

She said the people of Remo were known for showcasing political maturity and peaceful coexistence.

Ayoola-Elegbeji, therefore, urged party members and stakeholders to take urgent steps to arrest the situation.

She urged her supporters to remain calm, reaffirming confidence in her stewardship to her constituents.

Ayoola-Elegbeji described her stewardship as a symbol of responsible representation and progressive politics focused on growth and development of Remo Federal Constituency since assuming office on October 25, 2025, after the bye election.

She pledged her steadfastness at delivering purposeful,

**NEWS****Oyo abduction: Group urges decisive action for victims' release****IBADAN**

The Reformed Nigeria Youth Movement (RNYM) has called for more decisive and sustained action to secure the safe release of the Oriire Local Government Area abducted victims.

The group made the call in a statement issued by its National President, Mr Teslim Moronkola, in Ibadan on Wednesday.

The group said it received with shock the news of the attack on the community's educational institutions on May 15, leading to the abduction of 39 pupils and seven teachers.

It also regretted the killing of Mr Michael Oyedokun, a mathematics teacher.

"The circulation of the video of his killing is not only inhumane, but a direct assault on

the sanctity of life and the future of our nation.

"No child or educator should go to school in fear of being kidnapped or killed," it said.

It sympathised with the family of the late Oyedokun, the abducted pupils and teachers, and the entire Oriire community.

Meanwhile, the youth group commended the efforts of the Oyo State Government, the Nigeria Police Force and the Amotekun Corps for their response and on-going rescue operations.

It said the arrest of six suspects, including alleged informants linked to the incident, was a step in the right direction.

It urged governments at all levels to ensure adequate security presence in schools and communities across the country.

"Schools must be designated as safe zones with functional pe-

rimeter fencing, community policing and rapid response units.

"No parent should have to choose between sending a child to school and keeping them alive," it said.

The group also called for

improved security, electoral integrity and urgent measures to address the high cost of living in the country.

According to the group, transparent and people-centred interventions are needed to sta-

bilise food prices, reduce transportation costs and provide relief in housing and energy.

Concerning the 2027 general elections, it stressed the need for transparency and fairness in the electoral process, begin-

ning with party primaries.

It said that anything contrary could undermine public trust in the electoral process and discourage credible aspirants from participating in politics.

**2 people die, 2 injured in multiple road crashes in Akure —FRSC****AKURE**

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Ondo State Sector Command, has disclosed that two persons have died and two others were injured in multiple road crashes on Wednesday in Akure.

Dr Samuel Ibitoye, FRSC State Sector Commander, said the incident happened at the front of the Vehicle Inspection Office along Fiwasaye Secondary School, Akure.

Ibitoye, who said the crash involved one Tipper, a Nissan vehicle and a motorcycle, attributed its cause to brake failure on the part of the Tipper.

He said the scene of the crash was taken over by the

Nigeria Police, while the dead had been deposited at the state hospital morgue and the injured taken to hospital.

The sector commander, therefore, called on motorists to always take good care of their vehicles and check the brakes and lighting system before plying the roads.

"As a motorist, it's behoves on you to take good care of your vehicle because it is very important and significant and patience is the answer as well whenever you are on roads.

"Also, defensive driving should be adopted by every road user. Try and give space for another vehicle to manoeuvre so that everyone can stay alive," he advised.

**TUC leadership dispute: I remain Lagos chairman —Aladetan****LAGOS**

Mr Abiodun Aladetan has insisted that he is the duly elected Chairman of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), Lagos State Council.

Aladetan, in a statement made available in Lagos on Wednesday, said he was not aware of any valid National Executive Council (NEC) decision removing him from office.

He said, he was elected chairman on September 18, 2025, at the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), Yaba, Lagos, by accredited delegates from the 29 affiliate unions of the congress.

According to him, his emergence as chairman followed due process and complied with the constitution of the congress.

He said that there was an unconstitutional attempt by the TUC President, Mr Festus Osifo, and the Secretary-General, Mr Nuhu Toro, to replace him with an individual who did not contest for the chairmanship position.

Aladetan said that the individ-

ual obtained nomination forms for the office of secretary and was elected into that position.

"The election that produced me was in accordance with the guidelines issued by Comrade Nuhu Toro, on behalf of the National body of TUC.

"As a law-abiding trade unionist, I have faith in constitutional order, due process and the rule of law, rather than the rule of man," he said.

Aladetan disclosed that he had approached the National Industrial Court, Lagos Division, to determine the matter in Suit No. NICN/LA/129/2026, between Abiodun Aladetan vs Festus Osifo and four others.

He expressed confidence in the judicial process and urged members of the public, affiliates, labour stakeholders and the media to disregard contrary claims regarding the leadership of the Lagos council.

"The matter is now properly before the Court of Justice, and I have absolute confidence in the integrity and independence of the judicial process."

**INEC READINESS ASSESSMENT:**

L-R: Resident Electoral Commissioner, Ekiti State, Dr Bunmi Omooseyinde; National Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan, and Supervising National Commissioner for the Ekiti State governorship election, Mr Sam Olumekun, during INEC Readiness Assessment ahead of the Ekiti Governorship Election in Ekiti State yesterday. Photo: Omoye Aminu.

**Eid-el-Kabir: Kwara livestock traders decry low patronage****ILORIN**

Livestock traders in Kwara have decry low patronage as the Eid-el-Kabir festival approaches, attributing the trend to insecurity and prevailing economic hardship.

Some traders who spoke with our correspondent on Wednesday in Ilorin said the situation was affecting sales despite the proximity of the Sallah celebration.

The Chief Imam of Basirimi Oluwa Livestock Traders Association, Alhaji Kamaludeen Gatta-Harmony, said banditry and rising insecurity across the country had disrupted the supply of livestock compared to previous years.

According to him, unlike in previous years when traders

recorded massive sales ahead of the festival, this year has been markedly different, with Sallah barely a week away.

"We pray that God will have mercy on us traders because people are not coming out to buy livestock as expected.

"Not every trader can travel to the North to purchase livestock due to banditry and insecurity.

"We are also appealing to the government to pay workers' salaries to improve people's purchasing power.

"We have rams, goats, cows and even camels for sale. It is not that they are too expensive; everything is generally costly, not only in Nigeria but globally.

"We pray that God will guide our leaders aright so they can show us mercy," he said.

Gatta-Harmony said rams

currently sell for between N100,000 and N2 million.

He said Large-sized rams go for between N1.8 million and N2 million, medium-sized rams between N650,000 and N800,000, while smaller ones cost between N100,000 and N300,000.

Gatta-Harmony added that camels are sold between N1.8 million and N5 million, while cows range from N400,000 to N1 million depending on sizes.

He added that goats sell for between N65,000 and N250,000.

At the Mandate Market, similar price ranges, was observed with rams selling for between N120,000 and N1.5 million, cows between N350,000 and N1 million, and goats between N55,000 and N250,000.

A livestock trader at the market, Alhaji Jibril Moham-

med, attributed the rise in prices to economic challenges and high transportation costs.

He said transporting livestock from northern Nigeria to Kwara now costs about N40,000.

Mohammed explained that rams previously sold for about N200,000 now go for about N300,000, excluding logistics and other expenses.

According to him, prices this year are nearly 100 percent higher than last year, describing the increase as "very huge."

He, however, advised buyers against panic purchasing, urging them to buy according to their financial capacity.

Some consumers who spoke, expressed hope that salaries would be paid early to enable them make necessary purchases for the festivities.

**Experts harp on credible test reports to prevent building collapse****LAGOS**

The Lagos State Materials Testing Laboratory (LSMTL) has urged registered private materials testing laboratories to ensure their reports remain credible, accurate and dependable to safeguard and strengthen the built environment.

The advice was given by stakeholders at the beginning of a two-day technical training for registered private laboratories organised by LSMTL on Wednesday in Ikeja.

The training had the theme: "The Strategic Role of Private Laboratories in Materials Testing: Through Detailed Report Writing, Data Integrity and Quality Assurance."

The Permanent Secretary, Office of Works, Lagos State, Mrs Bolanle Olukare, said the training came at a time when Nigeria was grappling with incidences of building collapse and infrastructure failures.

She said that quality in construction, infrastructure and manufacturing depended on reliable data, stressing that laboratory pro-

professionals played a central role in ensuring accuracy and safety.

"This training comes at a critical time when we know that we have issues in our nation, particularly building collapse, and we rely on professionals to ensure such situations are avoided," she said.

Olukare said that laboratory experts were responsible for testing materials correctly, interpreting results accurately and honestly, and applying standards without compromise.

"You are the ones who know how to test materials correctly,

interpret results accurately and honestly, and apply standards without cutting corners," she said.

She described technical consultants as occupying a critical position at the intersection of science and standards, urging them to take the training seriously.

"Lives depend on it," she warned.

The General Manager of LSMTL, Mrs Olayinka Abdul, described private laboratories as critical partners in safeguarding public safety and ensuring structural integrity of buildings and infrastructure across Lagos State.

# World Bank to scale up Africa guarantees to \$6.4bn by 2030

## ABUJA

The World Bank Group has said that its Guarantee Platform aims to double its annual issuance of guarantees in Africa to 6.4 billion dollars by 2030.

A statement by the bank on Wednesday, said the initiative is expected to improve the lives of no fewer than 190 million people over the next four years.

The World Bank Group Guarantee Platform is a centralised, "one-stop shop" that consolidates all guarantee and

risk insurance products across the World Bank Group.

Hosted by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), it combines the experts and products of the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and MIGA.

The platform aims to boost private sector investment in developing countries by managing and mitigating political, project, and nonpayment risks.

It was created to streamline access. Instead of navigating separate arms of the World

Bank, investors can now access the full spectrum of guarantee products through a single entry point.

It removes redundant steps and aligns reviews, making the process simpler and more predictable for clients.

The platform is also designed to de-risk investments, encouraging commercial lenders to fund vital projects in emerging markets.

According to the statement, the Africa's working-age population is projected to grow by 740 million over the next three

decades, with up to 12 million young people entering the labour force annually.

"Guarantees will play a critical role in attracting private capital into job-rich sectors including agribusiness, energy, infrastructure, healthcare, digital services, finance and trade."

It added that the initiative would create jobs and support Africa's ambition to become a global engine of growth.

The statement said that new guarantees expected to be issued over the next four years would mobilise about 23 bil-

lion dollars in private capital for Africa through several development initiatives.

It listed the initiatives to include AgriConnect, a World Bank Group programme aimed at transforming small-holder farming, creating jobs and strengthening global food security.

Others are Mission 300, a joint initiative of the World Bank and the African Development Bank, supported by The Rockefeller Foundation, Global Energy

Alliance for People and Planet, and Sustainable Energy for All.

"This initiative seeks to connect 300 million people in Africa to electricity by 2030, while creating more jobs," the statement said.

The statement further said that the guarantees could, by 2030, provide 43 million people with access to electricity as well as improved financial inclusion for 50 million people and businesses, especially those owned by women.



## 2026 HAJJ EXERCISE:

Edo State pilgrims arriving at the Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport, Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday for the 2026 Hajj exercise.

## NAF airstrikes destroy terrorists' enclaves in Tumbuns, Mandara Mountain

### ABUJA

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) said its air component under Operation HADIN KAI has destroyed terrorist strongholds in the Southern Tumbuns and Mandara Mountains along the Nigeria-Cameroon border.

The Director, Public Relations and Information, NAF, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame,

disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja.

Ejodame said the precision airstrikes, conducted on May 19 at Bukar Meram in the Southern Tumbuns and Chikide in the Mandara Mountains, targeted key terrorist enclaves.

He said the strikes were executed based on credible intelligence and confirmatory Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions.

According to him, the operations led to the destruction of terrorist logistics hubs, structures and assembly areas concealed within the locations.

He added that several terrorists were neutralised during the strikes, while planned attacks were successfully disrupted.

"The Nigerian Air Force remains resolute in sustaining ongoing air offensives to degrade terrorist capabilities and deny them freedom of action," he said.

Ejodame said the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal

Sunday Aneke, reaffirmed the NAF's commitment to coordinated joint operations with sister services and allied partners.

He said the CAS emphasised that intelligence-driven air operations would be sustained to identify and eliminate terrorist hideouts, logistics networks and operational bases across the country.

He added that the continued offensive was part of broader efforts to restore peace and stability in the North-East and other affected regions.

## Police 'll dismantle criminal syndicates in Kogi —CP

### LOKOJA

The police command in Kogi has promised to sustain aggressive operations targeted at dismantling criminal syndicates and preventing the movement of illicit substances through the state.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Naziru Bello Kankarofi, made the pledge while addressing newsmen in Lokoja following the arrest of a 52-year-old man with 339 wraps of substances suspected to be cannabis.

The suspect, the CP said, was arrested during a stop-and-search operation in Kab-

ba, Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi.

Kankarofi said the operation was carried out on May 9, at about 1400hrs, following intelligence-led policing and proactive crime prevention measures.

"Operatives of the Area Command in Kabba intercepted a Honda Pilot Jeep with registration number LSD 456 GE during routine stop-and-search duties.

"The vehicle was driven by Chris Amos, 52, with Bilat Joseph as a passenger.

"A thorough search of the vehicle uncovered 339 wraps of substances reasonably suspected to be Indian hemp concealed inside.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the suspects picked up the consignment from Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti on the instruction of an individual identified only as "Alhaji," the CP said.

The identity and whereabouts of the said Alhaji, he said, remained unknown and under investigation.

The CP noted that both suspects were in police custody, and the recovered exhibits had been secured.

Kankarofi said investigation was ongoing to apprehend other members of the criminal network and ensure diligent prosecution of everyone con-

nected to the crime.

The commissioner stressed that illicit drug trafficking remained a major driver of violent crimes and criminality in society.

Kankarofi reassured residents that the command remains committed to protecting lives and property through proactive policing, intelligence gathering, and collaboration with other security agencies and the public.

He thanked the Inspector-General of Police for strategic leadership and support, Gov. Ahmed Ododo for backing security operations, and residents for providing timely and credible information that aided the arrest.

## Agribusiness: IFAD, FG train 697 young farmers in Ondo

### ONDO

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Federal Government, and Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises Niger-Delta (LIFE-ND) Project in Ondo State have enrolled and trained 697 young farmers to eradicate food shortage in the country.

Dr Olawale Ademola, IFAD State Project Coordinator (SPC), made the disclosure during the learning route for trainees of LIFE-ND in the additional financing phase of the project held at Nibanola Farms in Ondo Town on Wednesday.

Ademola, represented by Mr Gbenga Agbotoba, IFAD State Knowledge Management and Communication Officer, said the 697 incubates otherwise known as were trainees drawn from nine Local Government Area (LGA) of 49 communities in Ondo State.

The SPC, who said the learning route was to give incubates further technical skill and also expose them to other business

environments, said it would help incubates to be more focused and motivated in their business enterprise.

"Today, about 30 incubates were drawn from Akure North, Akoko North-West, Owo, Ondo East, Ilaje and Ese-Odo LGAs to participate in a learning route programme," he said.

Ademola explained that the incubates had been trained in their various centres in their chosen enterprises like cassava, cocoa, fishery and poultry farmers.

He said the learning route was to expose young farmers to practical knowledge and strengthen them in enterprise management and value chain development.

"The 697 incubates enrolled in November 2025, some were trained for one month and some for three months and each received N50,000 stipend per month.

"Now, the project is putting things in order to empower and support them by giving grants to start their business and to put into practice what they have been trained for."

## Police, NUJ renew commitment to peace, public safety in Katsina

### KATSINA

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Katsina State Council, and the State Police command have renewed their commitment to collaborate to make the State peaceful and secure.

This was made manifest when the newly elected executives of the NUJ paid a courtesy visit to the state Commissioner of Police Ali Umar-Fage in Katsina.

Led by the Chairman of the council, Aminu Garba-Dandagoro, the visit was part of efforts to strengthen collaboration and foster cordial relations between the police and the media.

Speaking during the visit, Garba-Dandagoro said the exco aimed to familiarise with the leadership of the command and reinforce the cordial working relationship between both organisations.

He said the union remained committed to supporting the police and other security agencies through effective dissemination of accurate information and

promotion of peace, security and public safety across the state.

The NUJ chairman added that journalists would continue to uphold professionalism and responsible reportage in the discharge of their duties.

He appreciated the commissioner and the command's management team for the warm reception accorded to the delegation.

Responding, Umar-Fage congratulated the NUJ chairman and members of his executive council on their election into office and wished them a successful tenure.

The police commissioner acknowledged the critical role of the media in ensuring peace and security, urging journalists to remain objective, fair and professional in their reports.

He reiterated the commitment of the command to sustaining its relationship with the union and other stakeholders toward enhancing public trust, cooperation and effective policing in the state.

## NEWS

## JUDICIARY

# Kogi CJ urges law school students to uphold integrity

## LOKOJA

The Chief Judge of Kogi, Justice Josiah Majebi, has urged Nigerian Law

School students on court attachment in the state to uphold integrity, discipline and hard work as demanded by the legal profession.

Majebi gave the advice while receiving some 20 students in his chambers at the High Court of Justice headquarters in Lokoja.

The students are on attachment at the Kogi State High Court as part of their mandatory practical training at the Nigerian Law School.

He stressed that the legal

profession demands ethical conduct, accountability and transparency at all times.

He warned against actions capable of eroding public trust in the judiciary.

“Remember, the legal profession is a profession of pride, integrity, discipline and transparency,” he said.

The chief judge advised students not to pursue wealth at the expense of professional growth and mentorship.

According to him, success comes through perseverance, discipline and hard work.

He also encouraged them to remain focused during the four-week attachment.

He urged them to take advantage of the opportunity to learn courtroom procedures and professional ethics.

Speaking on behalf of the students, Glory Emmanuel of the Nigerian Law School, Abuja Campus, appreciated the judiciary for the warm reception and orientation.

## Man bags 4 months imprisonment for stealing bunches of plantain

### ADO-EKITI

An Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, sentenced a 19-year-old man, Monday Ode to a term of four months imprisonment for stealing 20 bunches of plantain.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Bankole Oluwasanmi, sentenced Ode after he pleaded guilty to the charges preferred against him by the police.

Having found him guilty of the offence as charged, the court sentenced the convict to a term of four months imprisonment without an option of fine.

Earlier, the prosecutor, ASP Olasunkanmi Bamikole, had told the court that the convict and

others at large committed the offences between March and May 17, at Odo farm in Ado-Ekiti.

Bamikole said the convict and his accomplices went to the farm of a complainant, one Mr Dominic Ovie, a retired public servant and stole 20 bunches of plantain worth N150,000.

He said the complainant traced the convict to the market where he attempted to sell the plantain because he knew the species of his crop.

The prosecutor said that the convict eventually confessed to stealing the plantain, adding that he was hungry and wanted to sell it to raise money for food.

The offence contravenes the provisions of section 302 of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State 2021.

## Court directs couple to divorce legally before laying claim to property

### ILORIN

An Upper Area Court in Ilorin, on Wednesday directed Mr Mmala Uzochukwu and his wife, Mary to formally and legally dissolve their marriage before they can make certain claims.

The presiding judges, Mr Sunday Adeniyi and Hammad Ajumonbi, held in a ruling that the court did not recognise divorces conducted traditionally.

The court further held that, according to the law, the couple were still married until a lawful authority dissolved the union.

“The only divorce that can be recognised is the one done in a court, you have to file for

divorce before anything can be claimed.

“You as a husband should take responsibility for your children's upkeep, pending the conclusion of the case,” the judges held.

The case was adjourned until July 6.

Earlier, Uzochukwu told the court that his wife threw him out of their rented apartment four years ago and they had since been living separately.

He said that the traditional ruler of their village dissolved the traditional marriage they had.

“The dowry I paid was returned to me. I want to make claims to some other property,” he said.

## FBI secures extradition of Nigerian over alleged internet romance fraud

### ABUJA

A Nigerian, Samuel Ugberaese, has been extradited to the United States by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to face charges linked to international cyber romance scams.

According to a statement by the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, citing the U.S. Department of Justice, Ugberaese allegedly worked with accomplices to defraud victims through romance-based schemes involving false identities and fabricated stories to obtain money transfers.

He was said to have conspired with Oluwadamilare Kolaogunbule, a naturalised U.S. citizen, using a network of bank accounts

linked to shell companies to conceal proceeds of the alleged fraud.

The statement added that a U.S. federal judge has ordered Ugberaese's detention pending trial, following his earlier indictment by a grand jury in 2021.

He faces charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and money laundering, offences that carry a maximum sentence of 40 years if convicted.

It also confirmed that the extradition was facilitated through cooperation between Nigerian security agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, INTERPOL, the Ministry of Justice, and international partners such as the South African Police Service and U.S. Department of Justice officials.



### PUBLIC LECTURE:

L-R: Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), and Guests Lecture, Chief Wole Olanipekun; Chancellor of Anglican Diocese of Ibadan, Justice Helen Ogunwumiju; outgoing Bishop of the Diocese, Most Rev. Joseph Akinfenwa; his wife, Comfort, during the public lecture titled, 'The Cross to the Crown: The Travails and Triumphs of Faith as part of activities for the retirement programme in honour of Bishop Joseph Akinfenwa in Ibadan on Wednesday.

## Deregistration suit: Court rejects Adeleke's joinder bid

### ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday rejected applications by some parties and politicians, including Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun, seeking to be joined in a suit seeking the deregistration of several political parties over alleged constitutional breaches.

Justice Peter Lifu, in a ruling, held that the applicants seeking to be joined were not necessary parties.

The affected applicants include Governor Adeleke who is currently in Accord Party; Abayomi Arabambi, the Accord Party governorship candidate in Ekiti State and Mr

Sani Yakubu-Noma of African Democratic Congress (ADC).

Justice Lifu held that the applicants' political parties were already defendants in the suit, hence, joining individuals in the case would be unnecessary.

The judge also refused applications seeking a stay of proceedings, ruling that the matter had already proceeded to an advanced stage.

He said that halting the case at this stage would create hardship to other litigants in the suit, particularly as political parties were expected to submit names of candidates ahead of forthcoming elections.

“It is my considered view not to grant the stay except otherwise decided by the up-

per court,” Justice Lifu said.

He said that the Supreme Court had repeatedly cautioned the lower courts against granting undue stay of proceedings.

He added that the issues raised by the applicants lacked merit and were accordingly dismissed.

The suit, marked FHC/ABJ/CS/2637/2026, was instituted by the Incorporated Trustees of the National Forum of Former Legislators.

The plaintiff sued the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and several political parties, including the ADC, Action Alliance, Action Peoples Party (APP), Accord Party and Zenith Labour Party as defendants.

After the ruling, the judge di-

rected parties to adopt their processes in the main suit in line with the order of accelerated hearing earlier granted by the court.

While adopting their processes, counsel to the plaintiff, Yakubu-Abdullahi Ruba, SAN, argued that the affected political parties failed to meet constitutional requirements relating to electoral spread and performance.

Ruba, who relied on the Supreme Court authorities, contended that political parties were required to secure at least 25 percent of votes in prescribed elections to remain relevant under the law.

He urged the court to order the deregistration of the parties, insisting that none of the defendants had effectively countered the argument.

## Lagos govt arraigns NURTW chieftain for alleged killing of dispatch rider

### IKEJA

A 55-year-old National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) chieftain, Shamsudeen Oladiti, on Wednesday appeared before an Ikeja High Court over alleged involuntary manslaughter of a dispatch rider.

Oladiti is standing trial on a three-count charge of involuntary manslaughter, conspiracy and attempted murder, preferred against him by the state government.

The State Counsel, Mr Jubril Kareem, told the court that the defendant and others still at large committed the offences between August 27 and September 17, 2025, on Lewis

Street, Lagos Island.

Kareem said the defendant, on September 17, 2025, at about 3.00 p.m., allegedly caused the death of Ramon Imam by beating him with his fist and repeatedly striking his head and face.

He told the court that on August 27, 2025, at about 10.00 a.m., Oladiti allegedly attempted to murder Samuel Omale by assaulting him, causing severe injuries.

The prosecutor said the offences contravened Sections 230, 224 and 411 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

The defendant, however, pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

Following his plea, defence counsel, Mr Olanrewaju Ajanaku, informed the court of a bail application dated April 27.

Ajanaku said the application had been served on the prosecution, which confirmed receipt.

The prosecution raised no objection to bail.

He, however, noted that the defence had sought an order directing the correctional centre to confirm the defendant's medical status.

Defence counsel confirmed same.

Justice Lawal Alebiosu granted the application and ordered the Controller of Corrections, Kirikiri, to confirm the defendant's medical status at a state government hospital.

The court had earlier rejected the bail application due to some errors.

The case was adjourned until June 15 for commencement of trial.

### CORRECTION/RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **CHARLES OFURE** and **OWA OFURE LYSA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be called and addressed as **OWA OFURE LYSA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

### CORRECTION OF NAME

This is to inform the general public that the name **AMADASUN EZE** previously used in my Central Security Clearing System (CSCS) account with Clearing House Number (CHN) **C1586963AU** is incorrect. The correct and valid name is **AMADASUN ESE**. All documents bearing the former name remain valid. Concern authorities should please take note.

# Xi basks in spotlight as he hosts Putin days after Trump

Vladimir Putin's welcome outside the Great Hall of the People was a near mirror image of the reception for Donald Trump last week.

Two high-stakes presidential visits, just days apart, is exactly the image Xi Jinping wants to project to the world: talking to everyone, tied to no-one.

For China, these visits are proof that because of its massive economy and new-found diplomatic clout all roads now lead to Beijing.

"The new era of world affairs is less centered around

the West," says Samir Puri from Kings College London.

"There is a lot of latent power that China has on the world stage, it's not necessarily using it in its most direct form to settle conflicts, instead China's style is to try to utilise its stature in a more gradual sense."

The optics were strikingly similar - Xi confident in the spotlight as he played host. But the politics driving the two visits were very different.

Putin, who has been to China more than 20 times, appears to have a close personal rela-

tionship with Xi. But the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions have left him leaning heavily on Beijing, which is now Russia's top trading partner and its biggest customer for oil and gas.

It has been an unequal partnership for some time now, and that was reinforced today. Talks ended with 20-plus agreements on trade and tech, but no approval yet for the stalled Russian gas pipeline that Putin has been pushing for years. A lengthy joint statement also yielded no major breakthroughs.

"Both China and Russia need

each other, but Russia clearly needs China more than before at the global stage," says Dr Zheng Runyu, from the Centre for Russian Studies at the East China Normal University in Shanghai.

"Given today's international environment, deep co-operation with China is extremely important for Russia in dealing with many of its current challenges."

The Chinese leader seemed to have a strong hand as he negotiated with the US president too. Stronger trade relationships with the rest of the

world and China's dominance in rare earth minerals and advanced manufacturing have given him leverage. Beijing has found itself on an equal footing with Washington in the wake of Trump's unpredictability.

And in talks with both Trump and Putin, Xi faced leaders mired in costly wars that have dragged on for longer than they anticipated. For Trump, the war in the Middle East has turned into a global crisis that has plunged his approval ratings back home. For Putin, the invasion of Ukraine,

now into its fifth year, has isolated Russia and taken a brutal toll even on its own people.

In both cases, it also seemed apparent that now China has the power to set the tone and the terms of how it wants to engage on the global stage.

Xi's Chinese dream

Getty Images China's President Xi Jinping makes a toast during a state banquet for US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on May 14, 2026. Getty Images



COURTESY VISIT:

Putin and Xi Jinping have met more than 40 times.

## Far-right Israeli minister condemned for taunting handcuffed Gaza flotilla activists

Italy, France and Canada have denounced as "unacceptable" the treatment of pro-Palestinian activists who were on board a Gaza-bound aid flotilla intercepted by Israeli naval forces.

Israel's ambassadors to the countries were summoned after far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted a video showing himself taunting activists kneeling on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs.

His actions also drew rare criticism from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said they were "not in line with Israel's values".

A rights group representing the 430 participants from more than 40 countries who took part in the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) demanded their release.

The flotilla, which carried a token amount of aid, set out to highlight the tough conditions for Palestinians in war-torn Gaza. Israel dismissed it as a "PR stunt at the service of Hamas".

More than 50 boats taking part in the flotilla set sail from Turkey last Thursday.

On Monday morning,

armed Israeli naval commandos began intercepting the fleet in international waters west of Cyprus, about 250 nautical miles (460km) from the coast of Gaza, which is under an Israeli maritime blockade.

The GSF's organisers said all the boats had been intercepted by Tuesday evening, with one managing to get within 80 nautical miles of the Palestinian territory.

They accused Israel of an "illegal, high-seas aggression" and said Israeli commandos had opened fire at six boats, used water cannon, and intentionally rammed one vessel.

The Israeli foreign ministry said no live ammunition was used and insisted it would "not permit any breach of the lawful naval blockade on Gaza".

The ministry also said that all the activists had been transferred to Israeli vessels and that they would be allowed to meet their consular representatives after arriving in Israel.

On Wednesday morning, Israeli rights group Adalah said the activists were being "taken into Israeli territory entirely against their will" and detained at Ashdod port.

"The legal team will challenge the legality of these detentions and demand the immediate release of all flotilla participants," it added.

In the afternoon, Ben-Gvir - an ultra-nationalist who, as national security minister, oversees Israel's police force - posted a video on social media, captioned "Welcome to Israel". It showed him visiting a detention facility at the port of Ashdod where the activists are being held.

He is seen encouraging security personnel as they push down a female activist who shouts "Free, Free, Palestine" as he walks past her.

Ben-Gvir is then shown waving a large Israeli flag next to dozens of activists kneeling on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs. He tells them in Hebrew: "Welcome to Israel. We are the masters."

Other activists are shown kneeling on the deck of a ship as the Israeli national anthem is played.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said: "It is intolerable that these protesters, among whom there are many Italian citizens, are subjected to this treatment, which violates

human dignity."

"Italy also demands an apology for the treatment inflicted on these demonstrators and for the total disregard shown towards the explicit requests of the Italian government," she added.

France's Foreign Minister, Jean-Noël Barrot, expressed its "indignation" at Ben Gvir's actions and demanded an explanation.

"Whatever one thinks of this flotilla... our nationals who took part in it must be treated with respect and freed as soon as possible," he wrote on X.

His Canadian counterpart, Anita Anand, called the video "deeply troubling".

"This is a matter we take very, very seriously. It's a matter of humane treatment of civilians, and I can assure you that we are acting with absolute urgency," she told reporters.

Adalah said the footage demonstrated that Israel was "employing a criminal policy of abuse and humiliation against activists".

A live stream from the Global Sumud Flotilla showed Israeli commandos boarding a boat on Monday

## Ebola vaccine could take nine months as death toll rise further, WHO warns

The World Health Organization (WHO) says it could take up to nine months before a vaccine against this particular species of Ebola is ready.

Two possible "candidate vaccines" against the Bundibugyo species are being developed, but neither had gone through clinical trials yet, WHO advisor Dr Vasee Moorthy said on Wednesday.

WHO chief Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there have been 600 suspected cases of Ebola and 139 suspected deaths but numbers are expected to rise given the time taken to detect the virus.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, he said 51 cases have been confirmed in the Democratic Republic of Congo - where the first case was reported - and two in neighbouring Uganda.

On Sunday, the WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern, but said it was not at pandemic level.

Tedros said that after meeting on Tuesday, the health organisation's emergency committee agreed the situation was "not a pandemic emergency".

"WHO assesses the risk of the epidemic as high at the national and regional levels and low at the global level," he explained.

The 51 cases confirmed in DR Congo are in its eastern Ituri province - the epicentre of the outbreak - as well as North Kivu province. Of the two confirmed in Uganda's capital, Kampala, both had travelled from DR Congo, one of whom has died.

"We know the scale of the epidemic in DRC is much larger," the WHO chief said, adding that healthcare workers were among those who had died, which was a particular concern.

Local health workers say some facilities are being overwhelmed. Although personal protective equipment has started to arrive, they say they are still working without adequate protection.

Trish Newport, a Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) emergency programme manager, said health facilities are telling them: "We are full of suspected

cases. We don't have any space'. "This gives you a vision of how crazy it is right now," she told AFP news agency.

A WHO official said investigations were under way to find out how long the virus had been spreading for, but that their priority was to curb transmission.

The first known case was a nurse who developed symptoms and died on 24 April, in Ituri's provincial capital Bunia.

The body was repatriated to Mongwalu, one of two gold-mining towns where the majority of cases have been reported.

Araali Bagamba, a lecturer who lives in Bunia, said people understand how dangerous the situation is.

"For the last three days I haven't shaken anyone's hand and I observe that within the general population," she told the BBC World Service Newsday programme. "It's our habit to shake hands all the time... [but] the habit has changed."

Ebola is spread through direct contact with bodily fluids and through broken skin, causing severe bleeding and organ failure.

Bagamba said people "believe it will get worse before it gets better", because people did not initially realise it was Ebola.

There are four species of Ebola known to cause disease in humans, including Zaire, which DR Congo has dealt with on numerous occasions and is most familiar with.

The country is facing its 17th outbreak of Ebola, but the Bundibugyo species - which has not been seen for more than a decade - brings its own difficulties.

Bundibugyo has only caused two previous outbreaks - in Uganda in 2007 and DR Congo in 2012 - when it killed about a third of those infected.

Although less deadly than other Ebola species, the rarity of Bundibugyo means there are fewer tools to stop it.

There is no approved vaccine for Bundibugyo, but experimental ones are in development. It is possible that a vaccine for Zaire may offer some protection.

**NEWS****Foreign****Somaliland to open first-ever embassy in Jerusalem**

Somaliland has announced it will open its first-ever embassy anywhere in the world in Jerusalem, marking a significant diplomatic step following Israel's recognition of the breakaway territory. The move signals deepening ties between the two sides while drawing renewed international attention to Somaliland's contested status and its growing strategic importance in the Horn of Africa.

The announcement was made by Somaliland's ambassador to Israel, Mohamed Hagi, who confirmed that the embassy will be located in Jerusalem, while Israel plans to open a diplomatic mission in Hargeisa.

He described the development as a reflection of "growing friendship, mutual respect and strategic cooperation" between the two sides.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar welcomed the decision, calling it an important step in strengthening bilateral relations and reaffirming Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Diplomatic recognition and regional reaction

Israel became the first country to formally recognize Somaliland in December 2025, reviving debate over the territory's international status.

Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in

1991, but has remained largely unrecognised by the global community despite maintaining its own government, currency and security forces.

The recognition has triggered concern across parts of the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, with more than 20 countries and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation warning in December that the move could destabilise the region.

Strategic significance  
Located along the Gulf of Aden opposite Yemen, Somaliland occupies a key strategic position near one of the world's busiest maritime routes.

The area has gained additional geopolitical relevance due to attacks by Iran-backed Houthi rebels on shipping in the Red Sea corridor and Israeli-linked interests in the region.

Analysts also note that the development comes amid broader discussions involving Israel, the United States and regional actors about security cooperation and migration-related proposals linked to Gaza.

Broader diplomatic implications

Somaliland's embassy in Jerusalem would become the eighth diplomatic mission in the city, joining countries including the United States and Guatemala.

**Hezbollah drone strike videos show evolving tactics against Israel**

Hezbollah has increased its use of small first-person view (FPV) drones to attack Israel, including systems controlled by fibre-optic cables to evade sophisticated defences.

BBC Verify has geolocated 35 videos shared by the Lebanese armed group since 26 March which show strikes on Israeli soldiers, armoured vehicles and air defence systems in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.

Experts told BBC Verify the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has "so far been unable to develop any effective countermeasures", as the small drones can easily bypass detection systems.

The drones can also be made from commercially available and 3D-printed components - and are cheap compared to the high-value targets they can destroy, experts also said.

The use of cheap FPV drones has become widespread during the Russia-Ukraine war and has changed modern warfare.

While the Israeli military has not published all casualty details, Israeli media reports indicate four IDF soldiers and one civilian have been killed in FPV strikes, with dozens more injured.

The IDF told BBC Verify it recognises the threat from drones and is investing "significant resources" in improving defences, developing "more effective alert models" and

training soldiers for "improving readiness and increasing awareness of the threat".

According to the Institute for National Security Studies, the IDF has also been using FPV drones for several years, currently operating with them in southern Lebanon and against Hamas in Gaza.

Hisham Jaber, a military analyst and former Lebanese army general, told BBC Arabic the FPV drones can be "undetectable by radar" and the "hundreds" of them at Hezbollah's disposal have been used to disable armoured vehicles - including tanks.

Hezbollah has been using several types of larger attack drones against targets in northern Israel for many years, Jaber added, but the use of FPVs represents an "entirely different category".

BBC Verify has found videos of nearly 100 apparent FPV attacks shared on Hezbollah's Telegram channel since 26 March, 35 of which have been verified.

Hezbollah does not appear to have shared any footage of similar strikes from the conflict, which began on 2 March.

Map of southern Lebanon and north Israel, showing the locations of 35 confirmed FPV drone strikes inside the area of Lebanon occupied by Israeli forces. It also marks the 20km operational range of the drones inside Israel.

**ISRAEL AMBULANCE:**

Hezbollah drones capability, a threat Israel didn't foresee.

**US military jets and drones tracked near Cuba as tensions rise**

The US military has been publicly broadcasting the location of military surveillance flights near Cuba on plane-tracking websites, as Washington continues to exert pressure on the island's communist leadership.

Leaving flight transponders on "is likely deliberate", said UK drone expert Dr Steve Wright, with the US intending to send "a clear message it has eyes in the sky to maintain the squeeze".

BBC Verify analysis of data from flight-tracking website Flightradar24 shows at least five US Navy P-8A Poseidon surveillance aircraft and three MQ-4C Triton surveillance drones have been operating in the Caribbean near Cuba since 11 May. Some aircraft have flown as close as 50 miles (80km) from the island.

Flight-tracking data cannot give a complete picture of US activity off Cuba as military aircraft do not always broadcast their positions but share their location for portions of a flight.

The deployment of these aircraft comes as US-Cuba tensions have risen significantly in recent months, after Washington imposed an effective oil blockade on the Caribbean nation.

It has also been reported by news site Axios that Havana has acquired drones capable of attacking the US mainland, which Cuba's foreign minister responded to by saying the country "neither threatens nor desires war" and accused Washington of building a "fraudulent case" for military intervention.

These accusations were followed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio offering a "new

relationship" with the Cuban people on Wednesday.

Speaking in Spanish on the anniversary of Cuba's independence from the US in a direct address to the island's population, Rubio blamed the island's "unimaginable hardships" on its communist leadership - and not the US fuel blockade.

Experts said the public nature of these surveillance flights indicates the US is seeking to enforce the blockade and apply pressure on the Cuban government as well as deterring its allies like Venezuela from attempting to get energy shipments to the island.

The resulting fuel crisis has led to major power blackouts and triggered protests in Cuba. President Donald Trump has also put Cuba under significant pressure to "make a deal" and threatened its communist

regime that the US could intervene like it did in Venezuela earlier this year when it captured President Nicolás Maduro.

What the flight-tracking data shows

BBC Verify has tracked several flights by US Navy P-8 Poseidon surveillance jets including one on 11 May when the aircraft got within 50 miles (80km) of southern Cuba, according to Flightradar24 data. The P-8 continued to operate into the following day, when it was seen flying to the north of Cuba's capital Havana before returning to its base in Jacksonville, Florida.

On 15 May, two US MQ-4C Triton surveillance drones also operated off the coast of southern Cuba, with tracking showing them operating along a route similar to one previously flown by a Poseidon.

**Final two bodies of missing Italians recovered from inside Maldives cave**

The remaining two bodies of Italian nationals who drowned in last week's scuba diving accident in the Maldives have been recovered, local officials say.

Government spokesman Mohamed Hossain Shareef told the BBC they would be flown to the capital Malé for repatriation to Italy. The foreign ministry in Rome confirmed the bodies had been brought to the surface.

They were among five Italians who died at an underwater cave on Thursday. The other three bodies had already been recovered.

A Maldivian rescue diver also died during a search operation on Saturday.

It is said to be the worst diving accident in the tiny Indian Ocean nation, a popular tourist destination because of its coral

islands.

It is hoped that discovering the bodies will provide clues as to the cause of the accident.

The five divers have been named as Monica Montefalcone, associate professor of ecology at Genoa University, her daughter Giorgia Sommacal, a student at Genoa, recent graduate Federico Gualtieri, research fellow Muriel Oddenino, and boat operations manager and diving instructor Gianluca Benedetti.

The first body - named by Italian media as Benedetti - was recovered shortly after Thursday's accident near Vaavu atoll. The four remaining divers were eventually found by Finnish divers on Monday in the chamber of the cave furthest from the entrance. Known locally as "shark cave", it is up to 60m (197 ft) deep.

Two bodies were recovered

on Tuesday, and the final two on Wednesday.

Italy's Ansa news agency reported that Wednesday's operation lasted about three hours. It said advanced equipment - including underwater scooters - was used by the Finnish divers.

The recovery operation was described as complex because of the depth of the cave and the lack of space and visibility. The entrance to the cave lies at a depth of 47m, but the various chambers are at varying depths.

The Finnish divers were working with local police and coastguard. Officials said on Tuesday that while the specialist team brought the bodies to a depth of 30m, the coastguard divers had taken over the operation from that point.

Maldivian authorities are continuing their investigation into what went wrong during last Thursday's dive.

The weather at the time

of the dive was described as rough and a yellow warning had been issued for passenger boats and fishermen.

Four of the divers were affiliated with the University of Genoa, which told the BBC that it did not give approval for any kind of deep-sea dive as part of their scientific research.

"The requests submitted to the Maldivian authorities... were evidently made outside the scope of the mission authorised by the university," a spokesperson said. The dive was carried out "in a personal capacity", the spokesperson added, and not part of the research.

The university has said that it had suspended authorisation for any dives for scientific purposes - regardless of their depth - in March 2024, in accordance with a ministerial decree from that month giving guidelines for underwater dives.



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# Sports

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

## Edo Sports Commission launches grassroots talents hunt programme 'Discovering Tomorrow's Stars'

KEHINDE OSAGIIDE

Edo State Sports Commission, under the leadership of its Executive Chairman, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele in its quest to practically take Grassroots sports development to door steps of Edo indigenes, is commencing the implementation of its talent hunt programme.

The Grassroots development programme tagged 'Discovering Tomorrow's Stars' is scheduled to hold at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium on Thursday, May 21, 2026, beginning from 9.00am.

The initiative aimed at identifying and nurturing young sporting talents is being implemented across the three Senatorial Districts; Edo South, Edo Central

and Edo North with school children of Jss1- Jss3 as target.

To ensure the smooth execution of the programme, 45 technical officials have been drafted for the event, including 10 officials for athletics and five officials each for the seven combat sports.

Twenty secondary schools have been selected to participate in the talent discovery

programme, with 10 athletes of mixed gender representing each school in various sporting events including athletics, Judo, Karate, Wrestling and Taekwondo among others.

Speaking ahead of the event, the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele said that the catch-them-young programme is designed to encourage young Edo children to accept sports as part their culture.

"When we assumed office, we were given a mandate to go to the grassroots and 'Catch Them Young,' in line with Governor's grassroots-driven sports development vision under the SHINE Agenda. This is exactly what we intend to achieve with this project. So, we are taking it to the local government level for every child to opportunity," Enabulele stated.



## Premier League: Spurs at risk of relegation after 2-1 defeat away to Chelsea

Tottenham Hotspur lost 2-1 at Chelsea on Tuesday and still face the risk of relegation from the Premier League in their final game of the season this weekend after goals either side of halftime from the home side's Enzo Fernandez and Andrey Santos. Soccer

Fernandez let rip with a dipping shot from over 25 metres that Antonin Kinsky could not get close to in the 18th minute, electrifying the atmosphere at Stamford Bridge as the home fans revelled in the misery of their North London rivals.

The Argentina midfielder turned provider for Chelsea's second goal in the 67th, cushioning a high ball into the feet of Santos, who scored from close range.

Richardson got one back for Spurs in the 74th minute, but the defeat means Tottenham remain two points above West Ham United, who currently occupy the last relegation spot.

However, Spurs have a much better goal difference, meaning a draw at home to Everton on Sunday would all but guarantee their Premier League survival.

Chelsea, fresh from announcing former Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso as their next manager after a limp 2025/26 campaign, climbed to eighth place, which offers a berth in the UEFA Conference League next season

The Blues, who lost to Manchester City in the FA Cup final on Saturday, are one point behind Brighton & Hove Albion, who currently occupy the last of the Europa League spots.

Spurs had only themselves

to blame for Tuesday's defeat.

After Mathys Tel hit the post with a header in the 11th minute, they allowed Chelsea to dominate until Richarlison's goal raised their hopes of rescuing the point they needed.

Substitute James Maddison looked sure to equalise in the 84th, but Chelsea defender Jorrel Hato stretched out a leg to block his angled shot.

The win was Chelsea's first in the Premier League since March 4, giving their fans something to celebrate after a miserable run that included six consecutive league defeats. Soccer



RICHARDSON

## Beyond World Cup Qualification: Brands must sustain football investment — Omotoyinbo

Ayodeji Omotoyinbo, a sports media consultant, has urged brands, sponsors and the media to sustain investments in Nigerian football beyond World Cup qualification campaigns.

Omotoyinbo spoke on Wednesday during an executive breakfast roundtable held

in Lagos with the theme, 'The Super Eagles and the World Cup: Lessons for Brands, Sponsors and the Media.'

The event took place at The Zone, Lagos, and attracted stakeholders across Nigeria's sports business industry.

Omotoyinbo said the gathering aimed to bridge existing

gaps among brands, marketing agencies and the sports media industry.

According to him, stakeholders often reduce football business activities whenever the Super Eagles fail to qualify for major international tournaments.

"Most times, brands use the media to promote their products and services through the Super Eagles.

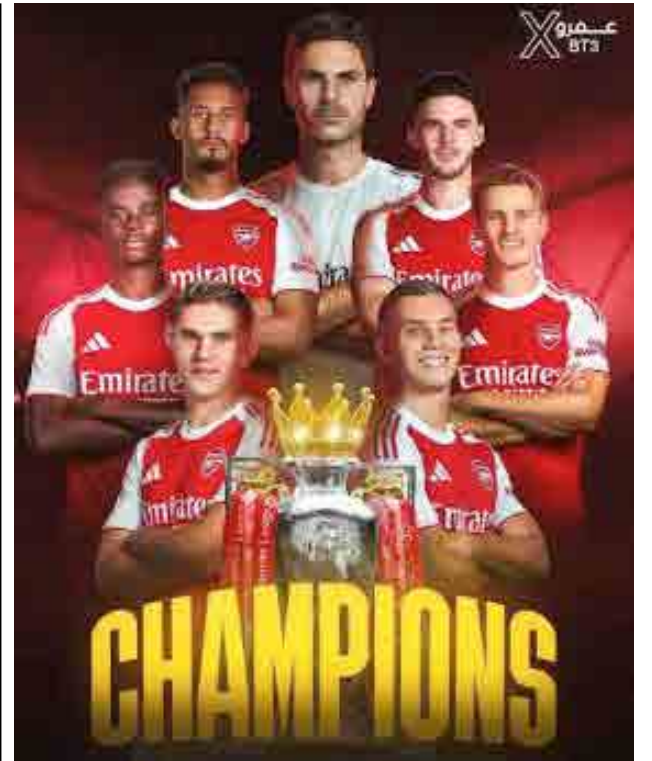
"But when the Super Eagles do not qualify for the World Cup, everything becomes quiet. Sponsors stop activities and the media also suffers.

"We need to sit together, discuss these issues and find long-term solutions that will help the sports business continue to grow," he said.

Omotoyinbo noted that Nigerian sports media had performed creditably in promoting the Super Eagles over the years.



DEJI OMOTOYINBO



## Arsenal are champions as City fail to beat Bournemouth

Bournemouth ended Manchester City's title hope with a solid performance that ended 1-1 draw at the Vitality Stadium on Tuesday night.

Bournemouth's Eli Junior Kropi's brilliant strike was the final dagger that buried Manchester City's title hope, handing Arsenal their first Premier League title after 22 years of waiting.

Erling Haaland found the

back of the net in stoppage time but it was already late for a comeback for City.

The draw takes City to 78 points, four behind Arsenal with both clubs just having one more game to play, mathematically handing Arsenal the Premier League title.

For Bournemouth, who are unbeaten in 17 games, the victory secured a first ever European spot.

## I'm poised to develop grassroots football in Aba South —Coordinator

The Aba South Grassroot Football Coordinator, Mr Christian Uduma, has said that he is fully poised to develop grassroots football in the commercial hub of Abia.

Uduma disclosed this while speaking on his blueprint for football development in Enyimba city, the home of Enyimba International FC.

He spoke in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Aba, on Tuesday.

He said that talents abound in the city, "waiting to be discovered and harnessed.

"Grassroots football be-

gan to depreciate about four years ago, when the Grassroot Football Coaches Association ceased to exist.

"Grassroots football is the cradle of football in the country as all the professional players passed through the process to reach where they are today.

"Our football is dwindling and that can be seen in our national teams, especially the Super Eagles," Uduma said.

He called on government at all levels to look into the problems of grassroots football and ensure that youths are engaged during long vacations.



ABA SOUTH GRASSROOT FOOTBALL

**Sports**



# Nigeria unveils Unity Cup squad, friendlies against Poland, Portugal

Head Coach Eric Chelle has picked his Super Eagles' squad that will battle to retain the Unity Cup Mini-Tournament that it won last year, as well as the team that will take on Poland and Portugal in high-profile friendly matches scheduled for Europe next month.

For the Unity Cup that will have a semi-final and Final at the Charlton Athletic Stadium (The Valley) between 26th and 30th May, Chelle has selected team captain Wilfred Ndidi, goalkeeper Francis Uzoho, defenders Bruno Onyemaeachi and Igoh Ogbu, forwards Moses

Simon, Akor Adams and Terem Moffi, and 20 other players.

The Super Eagles will file out against the Warriors of Zimbabwe at The Valley on Tuesday, 26th May, with victory to propel them to the Final against the winner of the clash between Jamaica and India, which holds at the same venue on Wednesday, 27th May.

There are also first-time invitee goalkeeper Arthur Okonkwo, defenders Emmanuel Fernandez, midfielders Raphael Onyedika, Tochukwu Nnadi and Ebenezer Akin-

Durosinmi, who is also joining the group for the first time.

Home-boys Michael Atata (goalkeeper), Elias Ochobi, Chibueze Oputa, Obinna Igboke (defenders), and Aderemi Adeoye, Ayobami Junior, Tosin Oyedokun (midfielders) are also called.

For the friendly encounter with Poland and Portugal, captain Ndidi, midfielder Alex Iwobi, goalkeeper Maduka Okoye, defenders Zaidu Sanusi, Calvin Bassey and Semi Ajayi, midfielders Frank Onyeka and Alhassan Yusuf, and forwards Victor Osimhen, Ademola Lookman and Paul Onuachu

are among a list of 24 players.

The three-time African champions, who have been drawn to face Madagascar, Tanzania and Guinea Bissau in the race to next summer's Africa Cup of Nations finals, will tackle hosts Poland at the PGE Narodowy Stadium in Warsaw on Wednesday, 3rd June ((kick-off, 8.45pm Poland time), before flying to Portugal to face Portugal (that country's last match before this year's FIFA World Cup finals) at the Estadio Dr. Magalhães Pessoa in Leiria on Wednesday, 10th June (kickoff, 8.45pm Portugal time).



## 27 Super Eagles For 2026 Unity Cup Mini-Tournament

## AFCON 2027: Nigeria draws Tanzania, Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau in Group L qualifiers

Nigeria will face Tanzania, Madagascar and Guinea-Bissau in Group L of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying series.

The draws, conducted Tuesday in Cairo, Egypt by the Confederation of African Football (CAF), launched preparations for the continental championship.

The 2027 tournament will be jointly hosted by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania under the "PAMOJA 2027" banner.

Forty-eight countries were drawn into 12 groups of four teams each for the qualification campaign.

Top teams from the groups will qualify for the finals scheduled for June 19 to July 17, 2027.

Nigeria, seeded among Africa's top teams, hopes to secure qualification after finishing third at the 2025 AFCON.

The Super Eagles claimed bronze at the 2025 tournament after defeating Egypt on penalties in the third-place match.

Tanzania's inclusion in Group L adds intrigue, despite the East African nation already qualifying automatically as co-host.

CAF rules require host nations to participate in qualifiers, although their places at the finals remain guaranteed.

Group A comprises Morocco, Gabon, Niger Republic and Lesotho.

Group B includes Egypt, Angola, Malawi and South Sudan.

Group C contains Ivory Coast, Ghana, Somalia and Gambia.

Group D has South Africa, Guinea, Eritrea and Kenya.

Group E features DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe.

Group F consists of Burkina Faso, Benin Republic, Mauritania and Central African Republic.

Group G includes Cameroon, Comoros, Namibia and Congo.



## 2nd phase Nigeria Beach Soccer League: Organisers announce kick off date In Kaduna

The ancient city of Kaduna is set to host the second phase of the 2026 Nigeria Beach Soccer League (NBSL) from May 29 to 31 at the Murtala Muhammed Square during the Sallah celebrations.

The three day competition will feature seven clubs battling for vital points ahead of the

Super Four finals later in the season.

Teams expected to participate in the Kaduna phase are Kada BSC, Kebbi Fishers BSC, BAM Projects BSC, Ibom BSC, Jigawa Golden Stars BSC, Niger BSC and defending champions Anambra Warriors BSC.

First phase held in Kebbi The first phase of the 2026

Nigeria Beach Soccer League was held earlier this year in March in Kebbi State, where the participating clubs opened their campaigns in an exciting round of fixtures.

Fixtures released ahead of the opening phase saw BAM Projects BSC face Jigawa Golden Stars BSC, while 2022 champions Kada BSC took on Niger BSC. Kebbi Fishers BSC also clashed with Ibom BSC, as defending champions Anambra Warriors BSC began the defence of their title.

The opening round also featured matches involving Kebbi Fishers BSC against BAM Projects BSC, Anambra Warriors BSC versus Kada BSC, and Jigawa Golden Stars BSC against Kada BSC.



NIGERIA BEACH SOCCER PLAYERS

## 2026 President Federation Cup: De Sapele Lions stun Katsina United 5-3 on penalties

De Sapele Lions Football Club pulled off a major upset on Tuesday, defeating Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) side Katsina United FC 5-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw in regular time to book their place in the round of 32 of the 2026 President Federation Cup.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the round of 64 clash at the Area 3 Football Pitch in Abuja, saw the amateur side take the lead in the 35th

minute through Seth Edjeba. The forward, nicknamed "Ikebe" by fans for his height and presence, rose highest to head home and give De Sapele Lions a 1-0 advantage.

Katsina United responded in the second half, with Ahmed Kabiru equalising in the 52nd minute.

The NPFL side went ahead in the 69th minute, through Manessa Yusuf when he took a pass from a corner on the right flank to make it 2-1.



DE SAPELE LIONS

**GOALKEEPERS:**  
Francis Uzoho (Omonia FC, Cyprus); Arthur Okonkwo (Wrexham FC, England); Michael Atata (Ikorodu City)

**DEFENDERS:**  
Bruno Onyemaechi (Olympiakos, Greece); Emmanuel Fernandez (Glasgow Rangers, Scotland); Chibueze Oputa (Trabzonspor AS, Turkey); Igoh Ogbu (Slavia Prague, Czech Republic); Obinna Igboke (Enugu Rangers); Elias Ochobi (Rivers United); Chibueze Oputa (Enugu Rangers)

**MIDFIELDERS:**  
Wilfred Ndidi (Besiktas FC, Turkey); Raphael Onyedika (Club Brugge, Belgium); Tochukwu Nnadi (Olympic Marseille, France); Ebenezer Akinsanmiro (Pisa FC, Italy); Alhassan Yusuf (New England Revolution, USA); Aderemi Adeoye (Ikorodu City); Samson Tijani (FK Dukla Prague, Czech Republic); Ayobami Junior (Shooting Stars); Tosin Oyedokun (Ikorodu City)

**FORWARDS:**  
Simon Moses (Paris FC, France); Akor Adams (Sevilla FC, Spain); Philip Otele (Hamburger SV, Germany); Owen Oseni (Plymouth FC, England); Zadok Abu Yohanna (AIK, Greece); Terem Moffi (FC Porto, Portugal); Rafu Durosinmi (Pisa FC, Italy); Femi Azeez (Millwall FC, England)

**24 SUPER EAGLES FOR FRIENDLY MATCHES AGAINST POLAND & PORTUGAL**

**GOALKEEPERS:**  
Maduka Okoye (Udinese FC, Italy); Arthur Okonkwo (Wrexham FC, England); Francis Uzoho (Omonia FC, Cyprus)

**DEFENDERS:**  
Oluwasemilogo Ajayi (Hull City, England); Calvin Bassey (Fulham FC, England); Bright Osayi-Samuel (Birmingham City, England); Bruno Onyemaeachi (Olympiakos, Greece); Zaidu Sanusi (FC Porto, Portugal); Igoh Ogbu (Slavia Prague, Czech Republic); Emmanuel Fernandez (Glasgow Rangers, Scotland)

**MIDFIELDERS:**  
Alex Iwobi (Fulham FC, England); Frank Onyeka (Coventry FC, England); Wilfred Ndidi (Besiktas FC, Turkey); Raphael Onyedika (Club Brugge, Belgium); Fisayo Dele-Bashiru (SS Lazio, Italy); Tochukwu Nnadi (Olympic Marseille, France); Alhassan Yusuf (New England Revolution, USA)

**FORWARDS:**  
Ademola Lookman (Atletico Madrid, Spain); Samuel Chukwueze (Fulham FC, England); Moses Simon (Paris FC, France); Paul Onuachu (Trabzonspor AS, Turkey); Akor Adams (Sevilla FC, Spain); Victor Osimhen (Galatasaray FC, Turkey); Terem Moffi (FC Porto, Portugal)

## UEFA hands lifetime ban to Czech coach who secretly filmed female players

UEFA has issued a lifetime ban to Petr Vlachovsky, a Czech women's soccer coach who secretly filmed his players, the governing body announced on Tuesday. Soccer

Czech media reported that the coach was convicted in a suspended one-year prison sentence and a five-year domestic coaching ban for filming FC Slovac's players in changing rooms, the youngest of whom was 17.

In a statement, UEFA's Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body (CEDB) said it had de-

decided to ban Vlachovsky "from exercising any football-related activity for life" following the appointment of an Ethics and Disciplinary Inspector to investigate allegations of potential misconduct.

"The CEDB further decided to request FIFA to extend the above mentioned ban on a worldwide level and to order the Football Association of the Czech Republic to revoke Mr Petr Vlachovsky's coaching licence," the statement added.

FC Slovac did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

# FEATURE



## Ize-Iyamu must respect Governor while APC must resist gambling with Edo South



IZE-IYAMU

OGBEIDE-IHAMA

DR. EBOJELE AKHERE PATRICK

It would have been proper to gloss over the recent political developments in Edo State, particularly the just-concluded APC Edo South Senatorial District primary election, in which Rt. Hon. Omoregie Ogbeide-Ihama secured the highest number of votes ahead of Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu and Senator Neda Imasuen, and remained focused on projecting the developmental strides of the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

That will not be possible because the governor's name has been dragged into a matter he knows little or nothing about by supporters and agents of Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu across various social media platforms over his recent political predicament.

The fact remains and very important too that Pastor Ize-Iyamu call his supporters to order and caution them against using uncouth language against the governor. His Excellency remains the first citizen of the State and deserves all the respect due his office.

The Pastor himself cannot claim ignorance of the fact that many of these attacks reflect the views of his camp. He also cannot claim to respect the governor as the leader of the APC in Edo State while simultaneously allowing coordinated media attacks against him.

The APC primary election to

choose the party's candidate for Edo South Senatorial District has come and gone. Former member of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Omoregie Ogbeide-Ihama, defeated the incumbent senator representing Edo South, Senator Neda Imasuen, and former APC governorship candidate Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu to emerge as the party's candidate for the 2027 senatorial election.

Ogbeide-Ihama reportedly polled 27,154 votes to emerge victorious, while Senator Imasuen secured 13,580 votes to place second. Pastor Ize-Iyamu came third with 6,785 votes.

Ogbeide-Ihama is widely regarded as a politician who can work effectively for Edo South and maintain a productive relationship with the governor and the party leadership. Many party stakeholders believe he represents the type of leadership capable of strengthening the APC's structure in Edo South ahead of the 2027 general election and helping to actualise the 2.5 million votes Governor Okpebholo has pledged for President Bola Tinubu.

His emergence has also been described by supporters as a reflection of the popular choice of many voters across the Benin-speaking axis, which remains the dominant ethnic bloc in Edo South. Party leaders across the senatorial district reportedly rallied support to make the victory possible.

For this reason, many party faithful believe the APC National Working Committee should respect the outcome of the primary and allow Ogbeide-Ihama to fly the party's flag in the forthcoming election.

Edo State has witnessed recurring political patterns that party leaders in Abuja may need to study carefully before making what some consider a costly political error. Critics of Ize-Iyamu argue that the former governorship candidate has repeatedly failed to secure victory at the polls despite contesting major elections.

Pastor Ize-Iyamu contested the Edo governorship election in 2016 under the PDP and lost. He later returned in 2020 as the APC governorship candidate and again lost to former Governor Godwin Obaseki.

Analysts within the party believe these defeats reflect a declining relationship with key blocs in Edo politics and argue that the APC leadership should pay attention to the message from the electorate.

Former Governor Adams Oshiomhole had also, during previous political disagreements, publicly questioned Ize-Iyamu's loyalty and political approach. Those criticisms continue to shape perceptions among sections of the party.

Beyond this, some party stakeholders fear that handing Ize-Iyamu the Edo South senatorial ticket could create internal tensions within the APC and undermine the stability of

the Okpebholo administration.

There are concerns among some leaders that Ize-Iyamu may seek to build a parallel political structure capable of creating friction within the party and weakening governance in the state.

Supporters of Ogbeide-Ihama insist that he possesses the legislative experience, political temperament, and grassroots support needed to strengthen the APC in Edo South. A former two-term member of the House of Representatives, Ogbeide-Ihama is seen by allies as an experienced lawmaker who understands legislative negotiations and constituency development.

They also describe him as calm, measured, and loyal to the broader interests of the party and the Okpebholo administration.

Many grassroots mobilisers, ward leaders, women groups, and youth coordinators within the APC are said to favour his emergence and believe he stands a stronger chance in the general election.

The APC National Working Committee now faces a critical decision: whether to uphold the outcome of the primary election and support what many party stakeholders describe as the popular choice, or reopen internal disputes that could deepen divisions within the party ahead of 2027.

• Dr. Ebojele is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo.



*Critics of Ize-Iyamu argue that the former governorship candidate has repeatedly failed to secure victory at the polls despite contesting major elections.*