

# 2027: Rivers Rainbow Coalition 'll leverage areas of strength —Wike

ABUJA

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike has said that the Rainbow Coalition in Rivers will align its political strategy on areas it commands electoral strength in the 2027 general elections.

Wike stated this during an inspection tour of ongoing infrastructure projects in Abuja on Monday, ahead of the third anniversary of President Bola Tinubu.

He explained that the political actors from different political parties that made up the coalition would assess prevailing realities before taking decisions.

“Our collective interest is the essence of the coalition in Rivers. We’ll look at where we have strength, compare notes and vote accordingly,” he said.

The minister also dismissed attempts to associate him with the issues surrounding the screening of aspirants in Rivers by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), insisting that

he had no role in the process.

He maintained that he would not speculate on matters outside his spheres of influence.

“I’m not a member of the APC, so I don’t know what is happening in their screening. Even if they publish the results, why would I comment?”

“What concerns me is what

I will talk about, not what does not concern me. I’m not a native doctor, neither am I a prophet,” he added.

Reacting to complaints over alleged harassment by officials of the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) during tax enforcement operations, the Minister said that no formal complaint had been lodged

with the FCT Administration against AMAC officials.

He, however, noted that tax compliance remained a challenge among many residents.

“There must be a civilised way of collecting taxes, but knowing our taxpayers, people don’t like to pay tax. When tax collectors come, they find one excuse or the other,” Wike said.

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That The People May Know

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#200

## JAMB fixes 150 cut-off mark for vassities, declares illegal admissions void

### Warns institutions against bypassing CAPS

ABUJA

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) on Monday fixed 150 as the minimum admissible score for universities and colleges of nursing in the 2026 admission exercise

It also warned tertiary institutions against granting admissions outside the Central Admissions Processing System (CAPS), declaring such admissions illegal.

The decisions were reached at the 2026 Policy Meeting on Admissions into Tertiary Insti-

tutions organised by JAMB in Abuja.

At the meeting chaired by the Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, stakeholders also approved 100 as the minimum cut-off mark for admission into polytechnics and mono-

technics for the 2026 academic session.

The minister said the approved cut-off marks represented the minimum requirement for admission and must be strictly adhered to by all institutions, stressing that candidates must meet the prescribed standards.

Stakeholders at the meeting also agreed on timelines for the completion of admissions into

tertiary institutions across the country.

Under the arrangement, public universities are expected to conclude admissions on

or before October 31, 2026, while private universities are to complete theirs by November 30, 2026.

Polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education were advised to conclude their admission processes not later

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## Okpebholo condemns daylight killing in Benin, vows to crush cultism

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo has condemned the killing of a youth by gunmen at the main gate of the University of Benin, describing the incident as a senseless act of violence and a threat to public safety.

The victim was reportedly shot dead in broad daylight on Sunday, an incident that sparked concern among residents and commuters around the university environment.

In a statement issued by the Edo State Government, Governor Okpebholo described the attack as brazen, cold-blooded and completely unacceptable.

According to him, the killing was an affront to human dignity and contrary to the values of his administration.

The governor expressed condolences to the family, friends and associates of the deceased, assuring them that those behind the crime would be brought to justice.

He disclosed that the Edo

State Police Command had commenced investigations into the incident, while security agencies were working to identify and arrest the perpetrators.

“They may run, but they cannot hide forever,” the governor said, adding that the matter would not be swept under the carpet.

Okpebholo reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to tackling cultism and violent crime across the state, noting that the government had intensified security operations in cult-prone communities since he assumed office.

He said the operations had led to the arrest and prosecution of several suspected cultists, while collaboration with the Nigerian Police Force, the Department of State Services and the Nigerian Army had helped to disrupt criminal networks operating in the state.

The governor also highlighted ongoing engagement with

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THANKSGIVING SERVICE:

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo (left), and his deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, during the thanksgiving service to climax the burial ceremony of the Idahosa’s mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa, at Winners Chapel, Sapele Road, Benin City. PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

**Jonathan eligibility suit stalls as plaintiff, INEC, AGF absent in court** —Pg 2

**NNPC-China refinery pact raises fresh hope —Expert** —Pg 5

**Dozens of Nigerian fishermen feared dead after Chad air strikes on Boko Haram** —Pg 16

**Chess: Akintoye becomes highest-rated Nigerian Chess player in history** —Pg 23

# Jonathan eligibility suit stalls as plaintiff, INEC, AGF absent in court

## ABUJA

Proceedings in a suit seeking to stop former President Goodluck Jonathan from contesting the 2027 presidential election suffered a setback on Monday after the plaintiff and key defendants failed to appear before the Federal High Court in Abuja.

The matter, instituted by lawyer Johnmary Jideobi before Justice Peter Lifu, could not proceed as neither the plaintiff nor representatives of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) were present in court.

Only counsel to Jonathan, Chief Chris Uche (SAN), appeared when the case was called.

Uche informed the court that the matter had earlier been fixed for hearing at 2 p.m. at the instance of the parties and urged the court to strike out the suit for

lack of diligent prosecution.

According to him, the plaintiff's counsel, Ndubuisi Ukpai, who was present at the last adjourned date, neither appeared in court nor communicated any reason for his absence.

He further argued that the plaintiff himself, who is also a lawyer, failed to appear without explanation, suggesting that they had lost interest in pursuing the matter.

"My Lord, what it means is that they have lost interest in pursuing the suit, particularly after we filed and served our notice of preliminary objection and other processes," Uche submitted.

The senior advocate noted that since all processes had already been exchanged, the court could either strike out or dismiss the suit, while also awarding substantial costs against the plaintiff.

Justice Lifu subsequently directed the court registrar to confirm whether hearing notices

had been served on INEC and the AGF, listed as the second and third defendants respectively.

The registrar confirmed that both parties had not been served.

Following the revelation, the judge held that, in the interest of fair hearing, INEC and the AGF should be given another opportunity to participate in

the proceedings.

Uche, however, argued that the two defendants were passive parties in the matter and that striking out the suit would not adversely affect them.

He further requested the court to award N5 million costs against the plaintiff, insisting that every procedural default

should attract consequences.

Justice Lifu declined the request and stressed the need to accommodate all parties, particularly INEC, which he described as fundamental to the case.

"Let us give them time. Let this order be served on INEC because INEC is fundamental in this case. Let us listen to INEC in

this matter," the judge said.

The matter was subsequently adjourned until May 15 for definite hearing.

Justice Lifu also ordered that fresh hearing notices be issued and served on the plaintiff, INEC and the AGF, describing it as the final opportunity for the absent parties.

## JAMB fixes 150 cut-off mark for...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

than December 31, 2026.

Speaking at the meeting, the JAMB Registrar, Ishaq Oloyede, directed all tertiary institutions to strictly conduct admissions within the approved timelines, warning that any institution that failed to conclude its admission exercise before the deadline would lose access to candidates for that admission session.

Oloyede also announced that successful candidates must accept admission offers within four weeks, warning that failure to do so would lead to withdrawal of such offers and could render affected candidates ineligible for further admission consideration for the session.

He said the measures were aimed at ensuring fairness, transparency and timely completion of admissions nationwide.

The registrar also warned institutions against issuing admissions outside CAPS, saying some schools were still offering admission letters to candidates without JAMB approval, contrary to Federal Government directives.

According to him, the practice undermines transparency in the admission process and has resulted in situations where candidates with higher

scores were denied admission while those with lower scores gained entry.

Oloyede disclosed that disciplinary actions had already commenced against affected institutions and that sanctions would be imposed on violators.

He further revealed that a case involving 11 universities over alleged illegal admissions was currently before the court.

The JAMB registrar also dismissed claims that candidates were posted outside their chosen examination towns during the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

He explained that candidates personally selected their preferred examination towns during registration and were only assigned to centres within those locations.

According to him, investigations into the complaints confirmed that no candidate was posted outside his or her selected examination town, adding that the matter had also been reviewed by the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC).

Oloyede reiterated that all admissions into tertiary institutions must be processed strictly through CAPS and urged institutions to comply fully with approved admission procedures.

## Okpebholo condemns daylight...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth groups and civil society organisations as part of efforts to curb cult violence and prevent young people from being recruited into cult groups.

He added that the state government was supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable youths as part of measures aimed at achieving lasting peace and security.

While acknowledging progress in the anti-cultism campaign, Okpebholo said the latest incident showed that the fight against violent crime was

far from over.

"Edo State will not be a sanctuary for criminals. Those who carry arms and terrorise innocent people will face the full consequences of the law," he stated.

The governor appealed to members of the public with useful information on the incident to assist security agencies, assuring that all information provided would be treated confidentially.

He reiterated the government's commitment to securing lives and property across Edo State and preventing further loss of lives to cult-related violence.



### RECEPTION:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (left), welcoming Senator Adams Oshiomhole to the reception hosted by the children of late Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa, mother of the Deputy Governor, in Benin City.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

## Tears, tributes as Edo Govt House Press Corps honours late colleague, Kingsley Uchegbu

### BENIN CITY

Members of the Press Corps attached to Edo State Government House on Monday held a solemn service in honour of their late colleague, Kingsley Uchegbu, an ITV/Radio correspondent attached to the Governor's Office, who died after a brief illness on Wednesday, May 6.

The service, marked by prayers and emotional tributes, was presided over by the Chief Press Secretary to the Govern-

nor, Dr Patrick Ebojele.

Speaking during the gathering, Dr Patrick described the late Uchegbu as a friend, brother and colleague whose life positively impacted many within and outside the Government House Press Corps.

"We already know why we are gathered here, to pay respect to a friend, a brother and a colleague who we lost. We pray his soul rests in perfect peace. We are here as a family and I wish that same bond continues with us," he said.

Reflecting on the certainty

of life and death, he noted that death remains inevitable irrespective of status or wealth.

"There is time to rejoice and time to mourn, and every occasion calls for its own excitement. But the reality in life is that one thing is certain, and that is death. Whether rich, famous or poor, it is certain. We cannot question God," he added.

Also speaking, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Electronic Media, Paul Ezenwa, described the deceased as a committed and dependa-

ble professional whose legacy would continue to inspire colleagues and associates.

"This morning is a solemn one for all of us because we should be asking ourselves what place in the hearts of the living we are going to occupy when we leave this earth," he said.

Ezenwa, who said he had known and worked closely with the late journalist for about 15 years, recalled Uchegbu as a quiet, gentle and dedicated man who was always willing to provide solutions.

## Senate moves to revamp Agric Colleges, Research Institutes over food crisis

### IBADAN

The Senate Committee on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions has unveiled plans to overhaul Nigeria's agricultural education and research system as part of efforts to address food insecurity and boost job creation nationwide.

Chairman of the committee, Senator Sharafdeen Alli, disclosed this during a media parley in Ibadan on Monday ahead of the maiden National Legislative Summit and Expo on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions.

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as MISS OJIMBA PEACE RACHAEL, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. AFEKHAI PEACE RACHAEL. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

The summit, scheduled to hold from Tuesday to Friday, is themed: "Unfolding the Potential of Agricultural Colleges and Institutions through Collaboration and Innovation to Enhance Food Security and Job Creation."

Alli said the committee had initiated diplomatic engagements with countries including

Malaysia, Brazil, China, Germany, India and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Union, to facilitate technology transfer, investment and training aimed at modernising Nigeria's agricultural education system.

According to him, the committee is determined to transform agricultural institutions from the-

ory-driven centres into practical, innovation-focused hubs capable of delivering tangible results.

"The era of treating agricultural education as purely academic is over. Our goal is to ensure that between 60 and 70 percent of training focuses on practical areas such as crop production, livestock and agribusiness," he said.

## UNIBEN VC hails Christian Union Alumni, promises greater institutional support

### BENIN CITY

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Edoba Bright Omoregie has commended the Christian Union Alumni Association of UNIBEN/UBTH (CUAA) for its sustained role in promoting the moral and spiritual development of students

and youths within the institution.

He gave the commendation during a thanksgiving service held at the CUAA Legacy Building in Benin City to mark the end of the association's 2026 annual convention tagged "Ebenezer."

Represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Professor Christopher Osubor, the Vice Chancellor

also reaffirmed the university management's commitment to facilitating the prompt approval of CUAA's proposal to acquire land and erect a structure within the university environment.

Professor Osubor, himself a former member of the Christian Union fellowship and current member of CUAA, expressed delight at being part of the growth and impact of the fellowship and its alumni body.

# Editorial



## Nigeria's insecurity crisis demands more than rhetoric

**N**o doubt, insecurity remains one of the most challenging issues facing Nigeria today. There is no state in Nigeria that does not have its fair share of insecurity.

From the North to the South and from the East to the West, communities are confronted with one form of criminal threat or another, especially criminal networks that exploit economic hardship, poor policing structures, porous security systems, weak institutions and other conditions associated with weak governance.

These threats manifest in different forms, with kidnapping and terrorism dominating national discourse on public safety.

One of the constitutional responsibilities of government, whether at federal, state and local levels, is to provide for security and welfare for the citizens.

As fundamental as this responsibility is, it remains one of the most difficult tests of governance anywhere. Whether government truly recognises the urgency of the crisis remains open to debate.

Whatever reasons may be advanced for rising criminality, there can be no justification for

violence and lawlessness, even if the government has failed in its constitutional responsibility.

The situation in Northern Nigeria, particularly in the Northeast, is a stark reminder of how deeply violence and lawlessness have taken root across the country.

For instance, last Wednesday, many people were killed and several injured in the Fan district, Barking Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State after gunmen descended on the community and opened fire on mourners who were conducting the burial of seven victims of an earlier attack.

A few hours later, in a midnight raid, about five communities were attacked simultaneously by suspected terrorists and also abducted six students of Nasarawa University and another person.

These are just a few of the cases that have now become a daily occurrence in different parts of the country. Many lives have been lost, property destroyed, families separated, citizens displaced and communities disrupted as a result of insecurity.

Government responses have largely remained at the level of policy pronouncements rather

than concrete action, suggesting that authorities are increasingly overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis. Addressing insecurity should go beyond mere propaganda and policy statements to concrete actions that prioritise the safety of citizens.

For other stakeholders, a lot still needs to be done through information sharing and community collaboration to complement government efforts to address the security challenges confronting the nation, because government alone cannot address the crisis.

Insecurity undermines progress, growth, development and good governance of any nation and Nigeria cannot continue on this trajectory where lives are lost on a daily basis. While the national situation remains troubling, some states have begun adopting tougher measures to contain violent crimes.

The Edo State government deserves commendations for its uncompromising stance in tackling insecurity in the past two years. These measures include the establishment of the Special Security Squad and the enactment of the anti-kidnapping law which provides the legal framework for stiffer penalties for anyone in-

involved in kidnapping and other related offences.

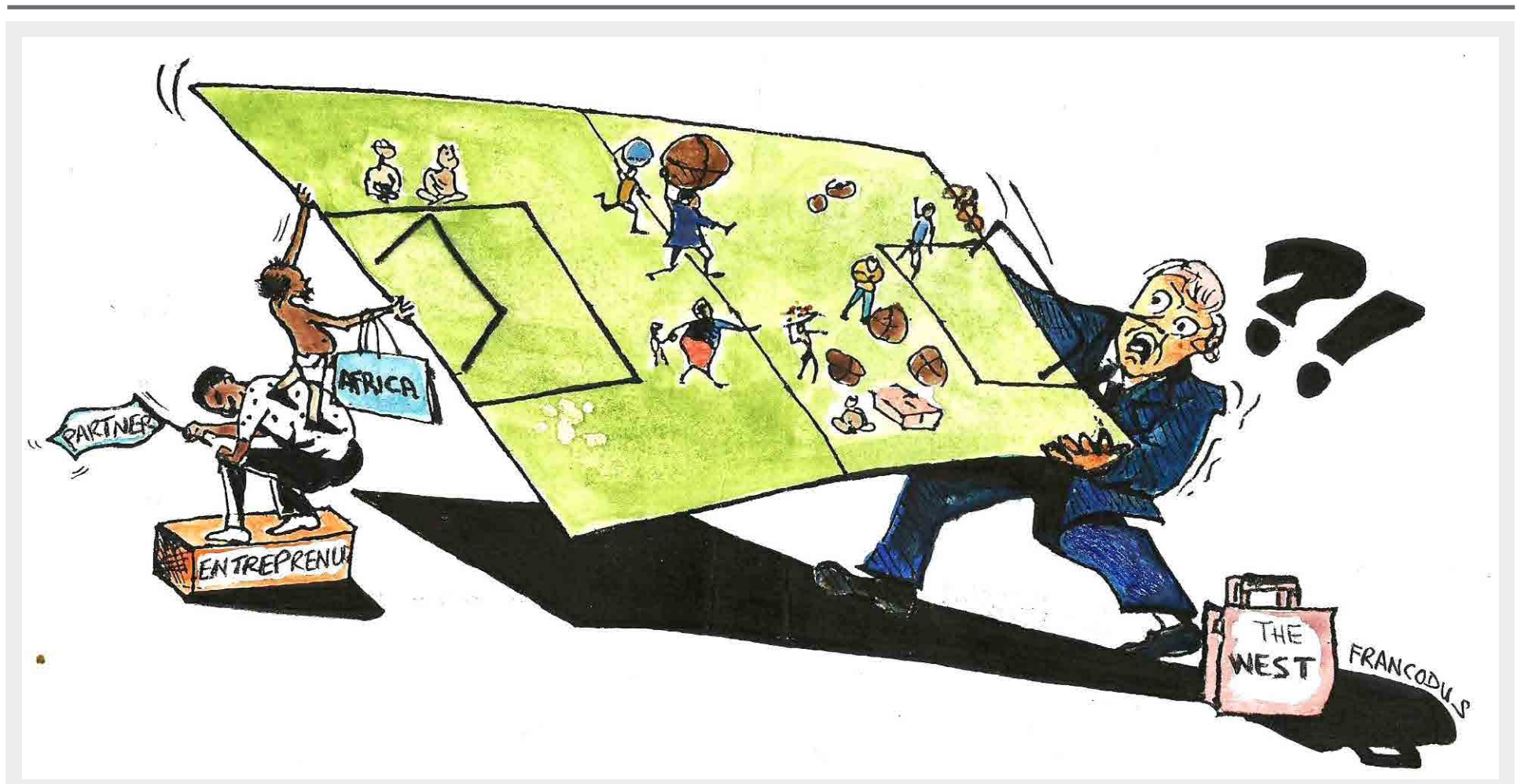
Beyond these, it has also intensified joint operations involving the police, military, and vigilante groups across known flashpoints and forest corridors, alongside sustained clearance operations targeting kidnappers' hideouts.

In addition, the state has deepened grassroots intelligence gathering through traditional rulers and community leaders, while supporting security agencies with logistics and adopting a firmer approach against criminal support networks.

Under Monday Okpebholo, these measures reflect a more coordinated, intelligence-led security strategy that is improving response capacity.

These measures appear to be contributing to improved security response within the state. Notwithstanding, there is always room for improvement, as expectations from the people are high.

Ultimately, without a decisive national turnaround that matches the scale of the crisis in Nigeria, insecurity risks becoming, not just a challenge of governance, but a permanent feature of national life that the country can ill afford.





Edo  
State Government

## THOSE WE LOVE NEVER DIE

No matter the age, a child will always hold a special place in their heart for their mother. Though physically gone, that bond remains eternal. We mourn yet celebrate the glorious passage of our dear mother, **Mama Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa (Nee Enabulele)**, who joined the saints on April 8, 2026. Mama Esther is (because those we love never die) not just the mother of my younger brother and Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, but a mother to all who were privileged to know her. We remember her exemplary life, discipline, service to humanity, and the love she shared so generously. She will be deeply missed.

As Leo Buscaglia reminds us, "we never lose the people we love..." and in this, we find comfort. Rest on, Mama. You deserve the rest.

**Sen. Monday Okpebholo**

Executive Governor, Edo State

# NNPC-China refinery pact raises fresh hope —Expert

**LAGOS**

A petroleum economist, Prof. Wumi Iledare has said that NNPC Ltd.'s new agreement with two Chinese firms could revive Nigeria's troubled refinery rehabilitation efforts.

Iledare, Professor Emeritus of Petroleum Economics, shared the view during an interview with newsmen on Monday in Lagos.

He described the Memo-

randum of Understanding (MoU) as a potentially significant move toward resolving long-standing operational and technical setbacks.

The agreement was signed between NNPC Ltd., Sanjiang Chemical Company Ltd., and Xingcheng Industrial Park Operation and Management Company Ltd. in China.

The arrangement is expected to support a proposed Technical and Engineering Partnership involving the Port Har-

court and Warri refineries.

Iledare said the MoU was not yet a binding commercial agreement or final investment commitment.

He, however, noted that it reflected deliberate efforts to attract technical expertise, operational support, and possible capital investment.

"Such partnerships can create pathways for operational recovery if structured and executed with discipline," he said.

According to him, Nigeria's

downstream petroleum sector requires strategic collaborations capable of delivering measurable performance improvements.

He explained that both refineries had suffered prolonged shutdowns, maintenance delays, and repeated rehabilitation setbacks over the years.

"The country needs solutions driven by competence, accountability, and commercial realism," he stated.

Iledare said the partnership could accelerate technical re-

habilitation through improved engineering coordination and modern maintenance systems.

He added that exposure to contemporary refining practices could improve operational efficiency and reduce costly system failures.

According to him, the arrangement may also support technology transfer and workforce development within Nigeria's refining sector.

"Nigerian professionals can benefit from direct exposure to modern operational systems and technical processes," he said.

He noted that such collaboration could build local capacity and reduce reliance on foreign technical support.

"If properly structured, it

could strengthen long-term sustainability and reduce dependence on external expertise over time," he said.

The professor, however, warned that implementation remained the most critical challenge facing the arrangement.

He said financing clarity, regulatory approvals, and institutional commitment would determine whether the agreement achieves expected results.

Iledare stressed that transparency must remain central, considering Nigeria's history of costly refinery rehabilitation programmes.

"Stakeholders expect governance, accountability, and measurable outcomes from every investment decision," he said.

**COURTESY VISIT:**

Vice-Chancellor, University of Benin, Prof. Edoja Bright Omoregie (middle), in a group photograph with representatives of the Christian Union Alumni Association (CUAA), who paid him a courtesy visit last week, in preparation for CUAA's annual international convention 2026.

## Fashanu Tasks Building Engineers on quality assurance

GLORIA OMORUYI

The Managing Director of the Edo State Public Building and Maintenance Agency, Arc. Emmanuel Fashanu, has stressed the need for proper structural layout and fortification of buildings at foundation level to ensure quality.

Fashanu made this clear during a recent inspection of the female hostel project at

the Medical School in Udomi, where he was taken round the site by the project's Quantity Surveyor, Engr. Femi Salem.

He said collaboration and timely exchange of ideas among building engineers improve efficiency in project execution, just as he emphasized the need for the ground floor of the project to align with the road to prevent flooding. Proper landscaping and adherence to the existing underground pipe lay-

out, he added, will allow water to flow freely into the drains and prevent blockages.

He urged the engineer to provide a comprehensive work design to ensure construction works are done according to specifications.

The Managing Director who also inspected the 150-bed hospital in Udomi, where he was received by Site Engineer John Jang, encouraged him to report any challenges immediately and to speed up work to meet project deadline.

At the Uromi General Hos-

pital, it's Medical Director, Dr. Francis Ekhosuehi, informed him that some facilities required upgrading, particularly the theatre.

After his inspection, Fashanu observed that despite being built in 1962, the hospital's structure remained solid, which he attributed to the use of high-quality materials.

He assured the Medical Director that a modern structure would be erected in the section of the hospital, while maintenance work would be carried out on some of the older buildings.

## Suspected cultists reportedly kill UNIBEN student, injure 3 others in Benin

**BENIN CITY**

Gunmen suspected to be cultists on Sunday shot dead an undergraduate said to be of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and injured three others in a violent attack.

The attack reportedly occurred at about 6 p.m. along the Benin-Lagos Road, directly in front of the university's main gate.

Witnesses said the deceased, identified simply as Alexander, was driving a Mercedes-Benz GLK out of the campus with two other occupants, when intercepted by another unreg-

istered white GLK Mercedes-Benz carrying masked gunmen.

According to eyewitness accounts, the attackers immediately opened fire on the vehicle at close range, targeting the driver's side before speeding away from the scene.

Alexander, said to be a student in the Political Science Department's irregular programme, had reportedly completed his examination about an hour before the attack.

Three other victims, including a female passerby struck during the shooting, reportedly sustained gunshot injuries

and were rushed to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital for treatment.

The spokesperson for Police Command in Edo, ASP Eno Ikodem confirmed the incident on Monday, saying one person died while three others were injured.

She said preliminary investigation showed that the victims were driving out of the university gate when another white GLK intercepted them and opened fire.

"The gunmen opened fire on the vehicle at close range, injuring the three occupants and a female passerby whose identity

is yet to be ascertained," she said.

According to her, Alexander was confirmed dead at the hospital, while the other victims are currently receiving treatment.

She added that the Commissioner of Police in the State, Monday Agbonika, had ordered a full investigation to identify and arrest those responsible for the attack.

Meanwhile, the management of the University of Benin has distanced the institution from the incident, insisting that the clash occurred outside the campus and was linked to cult-related violence.

## Troops kill terrorist, recover arms in Kogi forest ambush

**LOKOJA**

Troops of the Nigerian Army's 12 Brigade, operating under "Operation Tiger Paw II," neutralised a suspected terrorist and recovered a significant cache of arms and equipment in a coordinated ambush in the Adankolo Forest Reserve, Lokoja Local Government Area.

This was contained in a statement by the Brigade's spokesperson Lt. Hassan Abdullahi, on Monday in Lokoja.

The operation, the army said, is part of sustained efforts to secure major routes in Kogi State, following similar operations against criminal elements near Obajana and the Agbaja forest.

"Acting on credible intelligence on the movement of suspected terrorists, soldiers from the 12 Brigade Quick Response Group laid in wait at a known bandit crossing point within the forest reserve.

"On contact, the troops engaged the group in a fierce gun-

fight, neutralizing one terrorist while others escaped into the bush with gunshot wounds," it stated.

It added that a mop-up of the area led to the recovery of significant weapons and logistics.

According to the army, items recovered include two AK-47 rifles, one locally fabricated pistol, six magazines, and 145 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition.

Other materials seized, the army said, are one camouflage bandolier, a Honda motorcycle, Diclofenac medication, three mobile phones, three power banks, and cash amounting to ₦62,900.

The army said the operation reflects its sustained push to deny terrorists freedom of action and improve security along major routes and communities in Kogi.

It noted that the troops are currently combing the general area to track and apprehend the fleeing suspects.

## Edo FRSC RS5.1 Sector Command takes palliatives to Benin-Auchi bypass

**BENIN CITY**

As part of its corporate social responsibility to the people, Edo State Sector Command of RS5.1 Edo Sector Command has commenced the sandfill of some potholes on the Benin Auchi road to improve vehicular movement and reduce road crashes.

Led by the State Sector Commander, Corps Commander Preye Ezekiel Bedford, personnel of the command took time out to physically participate in the exercise which drew the applause of road users.

The initiative tagged "Operation Orange Impact" is aimed at ensuring safer roads and free flow of traffic along the Benin-Auchi Bypass.

In a released signed by the Command's Public Education Officer, Patricia Onwochei and made available to Journalists in Benin City, said the initiative was part of the command's commitment towards ensuring crash-free roads, safer motoring environment, and enhanced welfare for road users within Edo State.

"The exercise also demonstrated the commitment of the Federal Road Safety Corps to community service and proactive road safety management through Operation Orange Impact, a traffic decongestion and road intervention initiative focused on reducing hazards caused by potholes and obstructions on major highways, she concluded.

**NEWS****Lagos extinguishes Agege gas pipeline fire, records no casualty****LAGOS**

The Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) has said that the gas pipeline fire that occurred along Agege Motor Road, Ile Zik inward Agege, has been successfully extinguished, with no casualty recorded.

The Head of Public Affairs, LASEMA, Mr Olawale Afolabi, confirmed the development while speaking with newsmen on Monday in Lagos.

Afolabi said the incident involved a gas pipeline belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.).

He said the LASEMA Eagle Response Team arrived at the scene at about 3:13 a.m. following distress calls received through the 767 and 112 emergency toll-free lines.

According to him, responders met the gas pipeline engulfed in flames on arrival, while the cause of the incident is still under investigation.

Afolabi said no life was lost and no injury was recorded, attributing the outcome to the swift evacuation of residents and the immediate establishment of safety perimeters around the affected area.

He said a combined emergency response involving the LASEMA Response Team (LRT), LASEMA Response Unit (LRU) firefighters and the Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service successfully contained and extinguished the inferno.

“The gas pipeline valve was shut, while the inferno was successfully extinguished through the combined efforts of the LRT, LRU firefighters and the Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service,” he said.

Afolabi added that the operation had been concluded successfully and all emergency responders had returned to base safely.

He said the Permanent Secretary of LASEMA, Dr Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, assured residents that the situation was under control and that emergency response protocols were fully activated to safeguard lives and property.

Oke-Osanyintolu said the Lagos State Government was working closely with NNPC Ltd. to ensure that the affected pipeline was safely isolated and subjected to integrity checks before being reactivated.

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**Aiyedatiwa celebrates Fasoranti at 100****AKURE**

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has congratulated the leader of pan-Yoruba socio-political group, Afenifere, Pa Reuben Fasoranti, on his 100th birthday.

This is contained in a statement personally signed by Aiyedatiwa and made available to newsmen on Monday in Akure.

The governor described Fasoranti as an extraordinary statesman, exemplary patriot, revered ‘Awoist’ and one of the founding fathers of Ondo State.

Aiyedatiwa said Fasoranti’s attainment of the age of 100 was not only a rare divine blessing, but also a celebration of a life devoted to service, truth, courage and humanity.

According to him, Fasoranti’s life journey remains a shining testimony to disciplined leadership, integrity and enduring dedication to societal progress.

Aiyedatiwa noted that Fasoranti played a historic role in the agitation and movement that culminated in the creation of Ondo State in 1976.

He said the elder statesman’s sacrifices, alongside those of other progressive leaders of that era, laid the foundation for the development, identity and growth the state enjoys today.

The governor also commended Fasoranti’s contributions to national development, democratic struggles, educational advancement and preservation of Yoruba cultural values.

“Baba has remained a towering voice in national development, democratic struggles, educational advancement and the preservation of the cherished values of the Yoruba people.

“His courage, wisdom, simplicity and steadfast commitment to justice continue to inspire generations of leaders.

“At one hundred, Baba remains a symbol of honour, resilience and selfless service.

“His life embodies the finest ideals of the Omoluabi ethos and the progressive tradition for which our people are renowned,” he said.

**Sanwo-Olu calls for united fight against piracy****ABUJA**

The Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, have called for a united and uncompromising fight against piracy in Africa’s entertainment industry.

This was contained in statement by Dr John Asein, Director-General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), and made available to newsmen by NCC’s Director, Public Affairs, Mrs Ijeoma Egbunike on Sunday in Abuja.

Sanwo-Olu, who made this call at 12th edition of the 2026 Africa Magic Viewers’ Choice Awards (AMVCA) held in Lagos, warned that the remarkable achievements of the creative sector could be undermined, if intellectual property theft was allowed to thrive.

Addressing hundreds of filmmakers, actors, producers, directors, and other creative professionals at the event, the governor said that creative excellence and artistic brilliance would amount to little, if creators were denied the full economic rewards of their labour.

“All of the great work you are

all doing will amount to nothing if we let piracy take shine out of all of this, while acknowledging the growing global influence of African film, music and digital content.”

Sanwo-Olu further lamented that piracy has continued to drain revenue, discourage investment and weaken the long-term sustainability of the creative sector.

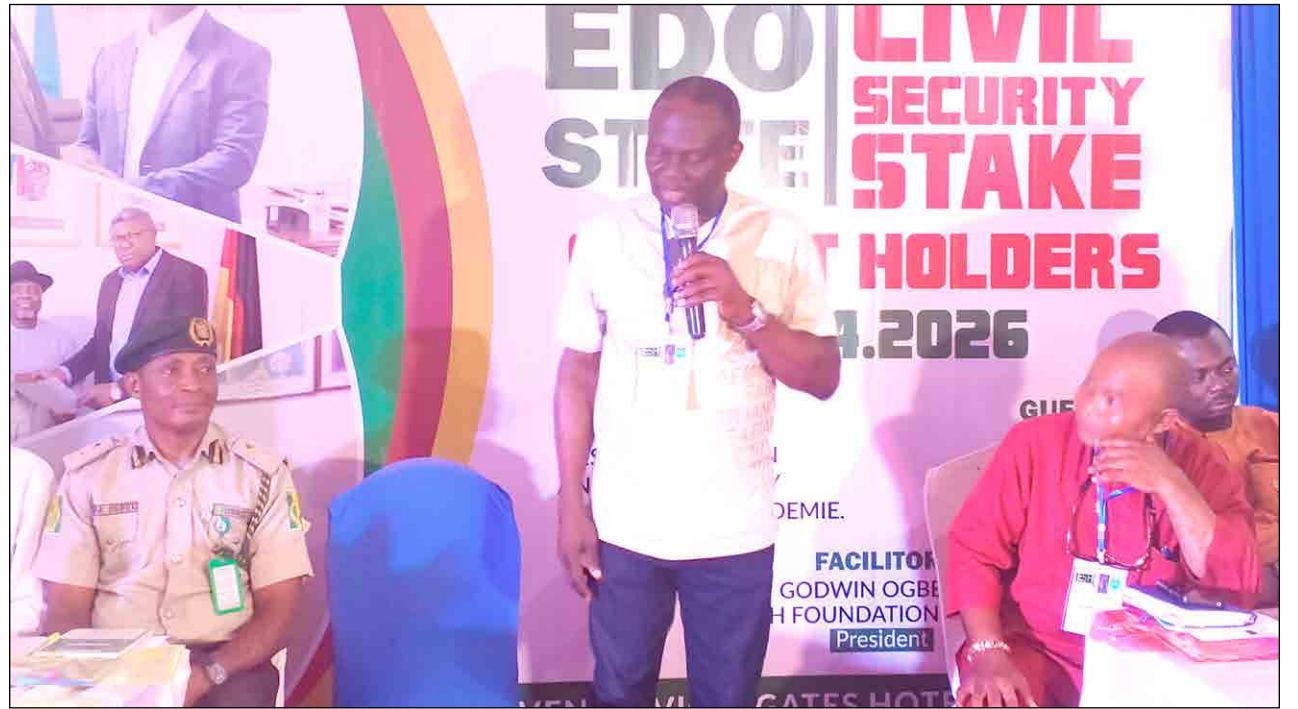
The Governor noted that Africa’s creative industry is driven by extraordinary talent, creativity, and intellectual capacity.

He stressed that these gifts must translate into meaningful economic prosperity for creators and industry practitioners.

“We need to kill piracy in whatever form, shape, because we want you all to be economically sound, have the full benefit, as well as full economic benefit of your sweat,” he said.

Earlier, Asein reinforced the need for stronger collective action against piracy and copyright abuse.

The NCC DG further reminded the audience that piracy threatened creativity and the livelihood of all whose talents bring stories to life.

**ADDRESSING PARTICIPANTS:**

Edo State Commissioner for Communication and Strategy, Hon. Kassim Afugbua, addressing participants at the Edo State Civil Security Stakeholders Summit held by FESH Foundation in Benin City.

PHOTO: FRANCIS ODUPUTE

**NPA records increased cargo, vessel traffic in Q1****LAGOS**

The Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority, Abubakar Dantsoho, has said that the maritime sector recorded strong growth in the first quarter of 2026, driven by increased cargo throughput, larger vessel traffic and ongoing port reforms.

Dantsoho disclosed this in a statement issued in Lagos by the NPA General Manager, Corporate Communications and Strategy, Mr Ikechukwu Onyemekara.

He said ocean-going vessel Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT) rose by 19.5 percent to 46.75 million in first quarter 2026, reflecting improved cargo efficiency and growing confidence by international shipping lines in Nigerian ports.

According to him, the increase was driven largely by the deployment of larger vessels linked to activities at Lekki Deep Sea Port and rising regional trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

“Ports must evolve beyond old limits. Efficiency, speed and reliability will determine who leads African trade,” he said.

Dantsoho said total cargo throughput rose by 11.6 per cent year-on-year to 32.38 million metric tonnes during the period.

He added that outward cargo increased by 23.7 percent to 14.13 million tonnes, while outward laden containers rose by 67.6 percent to 102,803 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs).

According to him, vehicle traffic also increased by 67 percent to 58,870 units, while transshipment containers climbed by 83.1 percent, indicating Nigeria’s growing role in regional trade.

“The time has come to fully

utilise our marine resources. Ports can drive major economic growth if properly harnessed,” he said.

Dantsoho noted that reforms under the administration of Bola Tinubu were focused on infrastructure upgrades, digitalisation and restructuring aimed at positioning Nigeria as a leading maritime hub in Africa.

He disclosed that the one billion dollar overhaul of the Lagos Port Complex and Tin Can Island Port was underway following approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Also speaking, the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, said procurement processes were ongoing for upgrades at Warri, Port Harcourt, Onne and Calabar ports to ensure balanced development.

Oyetola added that the Port

Community System and National Single Window project would help reduce delays, lower costs and improve transparency in port operations.

He also noted that investments in rail, inland dry ports, barging and export corridors were aimed at easing congestion and improving cargo evacuation.

According to the NPA, Nigeria has also sustained over four years without piracy incidents under the Deep Blue Programme.

Dantsoho said Nigeria still handles only 25 percent of West Africa’s cargo despite accounting for about 60 percent of the region’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

“With sustained commitment, Nigeria’s port system will emerge as Africa’s leading maritime logistics hub,” he said.

**11 die in lone accident on Lagos-Abeokuta Expressway****ABEOKUTA**

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Ogun Command, said that no fewer than 11 persons lost their lives in a lone accident on Eruku bridge along the Lagos-Abeokuta expressway on Sunday.

The Sector Commander, Oludare Ogunjobi, disclosed this in a statement issued on Monday in Abeokuta by the

command’s Public Education Officer, Mr Odunsi Afolabi.

Ogunjobi said the fatal accident occurred on Sunday night, involving a gold Toyota vehicle with registration number GGE 722 KJ.

According to him, the vehicle somersaulted and plunged off the bridge, trapping all the occupants inside as the doors reportedly locked.

He said personnel from the Itori Unit Command of the FRSC

were immediately deployed to the scene for rescue operations.

The sector commander stated that all the 11 occupants of the vehicle, comprising 10 adult males and one adult female, died in the crash.

“FRSC personnel, with support from members of the local community, dismantled the vehicle to recover the bodies of the victims,” he said.

Ogunjobi added that the

corpses had been deposited at the State Specialist Hospital morgue in Ifo.

He attributed the crash to suspected driving under the influence and overloading.

The sector commander advised motorists plying the Abeokuta-Lagos route to exercise caution, particularly during night journeys.

He expressed condolences to the families of the deceased.

# NCE applicants with 4 credits exempted from UTME—Alausa

**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has approved the exemption of candidates seeking admission into the National Certificate in Education (NCE) programme with minimum of four credits from sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, announced the policy on Monday in Abuja, at the 2026 Policy Meeting on Admissions into Tertiary Institutions organised by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

The event also featured the 6th

Edition of the National Tertiary Admissions Performance-Merit (NATAP-M) awards.

Alausa said the decision followed consultations with stakeholders aimed at expanding access to teacher education and strengthening enrollment in Colleges of Education (CoE) nationwide.

He explained that eligible candidates would, however, be required to register with JAMB for proper screening, verification and issuance of admission letters through the Central Admissions Processing System (CAPS).

According to him, the exemption is part of deliberate reforms to harness the admis-

sion capacity of colleges of education, particularly within local communities.

“In recognition of this reality, the Federal Ministry of Education, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, has taken a deliberate policy position.

“Accordingly, candidates seeking admission into the NCE programme, who possess a minimum of four credit passes, will no longer be required to sit for the UTME.

“However, it is imperative to emphasise that such candidates shall mandatorily register with JAMB, and their credentials shall be duly screened, verified, and certified for the

issuance of admission letters through CAPS, in accordance with extant regulations.”

The minister added that the exemption would also apply to candidates seeking admission into National Diploma programmes in non-technology agricultural and agriculture-related courses.

He said the measure was designed to ease pressure associated with UTME, while encouraging participation in critical sectors essential to national development.

He reiterated that admissions conducted outside CAPS remained illegal and would not be recognised by government.

He also warned that institutions violating established admission procedures risked sanctions, including suspension of operating licences where applicable.

Alausa reaffirmed government’s position on 16 years as the minimum admission age into tertiary institutions, noting that the decision aimed at maintaining inclusivity and ac-

ademic readiness.

He noted that the federal government was implementing wide-ranging reforms in the education sector focused on access, quality, governance and accountability.

He commended JAMB for deploying technology-driven solutions that enhanced fairness and credibility in the admissions process.

## Nigerian political parties lack distinct ideologies to guide governance —Ex-Envoy

**ABUJA**

Former Nigerian Ambassador to Chad, Amb. Abdullah Omaki, has said that most Nigerian political parties lacked functional, distinct ideologies to guide governance.

Omaki, made this known in an interview with newsmen in Abuja.

He said that political parties need to become “schools of public leadership” that utilise their manifestos to structure government policies.

According to him, elected officials are supposed to implement their party’s manifesto and deliver democratic dividends to citizens.

He noted that a politician’s achievements are usually attributed to the party because they are meant to act within its framework.

“Based on those achievements, people can assess the party and judge its performance in the next election,” he said.

Omaki, who is also the Founder of Abdullahi Omaki

Community Peace Initiative Network, further lamented that today’s political rallies rarely focus on policy.

“Instead, supporters just sing the praises of individuals for what they did and didn’t do.

“For me, we have a very long way to go. If we continue like this, smaller countries in the subregion will soon stabilize and overtake us in governance and coordination.”

He contrasted the current system with the Second Republic, when party leadership was strong enough to compel elected officials to follow party decisions.

“Back then, as president or governor, you are subjected to the party’s dictates.

“Today, governors are called leaders of their state parties, and the president is called the party leader at the federal level. That is cumbersome. There is no separation of power.”

Omaki argued that introducing a clear separation of powers is necessary to restore discipline and balance in Nigeria’s political system.



### PEACE WALK AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:

Members of the Princess Anita Teens Development Initiative (PATDI) led by the Convener/Executive Director, Princess Anita Umeweni (2nd, R), during a peace walk and awareness campaign to promote a crime-free society among teens, at the Old Parade Ground in Abuja, recently.

## Katsina approves ₦3.8bn loan to secure 3,890 Hajj slots

**KATSINA**

The Katsina State Government has approved a ₦3.8 billion loan facility to secure 3,890 Hajj slots for intending pilgrims from the state for the 2026 pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

Governor Dikko Radda disclosed this in Katsina during the official farewell ceremony for the state’s intending pilgrims departing for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He said the intervention became necessary after the state initially faced financial challenges in meeting its allocated Hajj slots through the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

“I was informed that the state initially had difficulty meeting its allocated Hajj slots.

“In response, we approved a ₦3.8 billion loan, which enabled Katsina state to secure and fill 3,890 slots for this year’s Hajj,” he said.

Radda urged pilgrims to pray for lasting peace, unity, and improved security in Katsina state and Nigeria while in the Holy Land.

He also announced that the state government would sponsor Hadaya for all intending pilgrims to enhance their welfare during the pilgrimage.

“Each pilgrim will receive a \$500 allowance to cover basic needs in Saudi Arabia.

“200 officials have been deployed to provide spiritual

guidance, medical support, and logistical assistance throughout the Hajj exercise.

“All officials have been carefully selected and equipped to support pilgrims throughout the pilgrimage,” he said.

Radda added that his administration had strengthened the capacity of the State Pilgrims Welfare Board to improve efficiency and address past challenges.

“We have taken deliberate steps to improve the board’s structure and efficiency.

## Benfruit Juice factory ready for full-scale production —Official

**MAKURDI**

The Benue Investment and Property Company (BIPC) says its subsidiary, the Benfruit Juice Factory, is set for full-scale production.

BIPC Group Managing Director Dr Raymond Asemakaha made the disclosure in Makurdi at the final test run of the factory.

Asemakaha, who was represented by Mr Henry Boager, Maintenance Manager, told newsmen that the final testing phase was conducted successfully.

The GMD said that the production system was running concurrently and had already commenced crushing operations.

“We started the final test run early Sunday, and so far, everything is going smoothly. Our system is running concurrently, and we have successfully commenced crushing operations.

“Ordinarily, the system capacity is four tonnes per hour, but we started with two tonnes per hour and gradually increased production.

“The crushing rate has now risen to three tonnes per hour,

and we are working towards attaining the full four tonnes per hour capacity,” he said.

Asemakaha explained that the final phase was also used to test the efficiency and capacity of the equipment.

“We have already crushed 6,000 litres in the testing phase and successfully extracted the juice.

“We preheated the product, sent it to the refinery for pulp separation, and later transferred it to the concentration chamber. The juice is currently in the chamber.

“We discovered that we can send 400 litres into the juice tank every 30 minutes and about 2,200 litres every hour into the concentration chamber.

“At the end of the process, calculations show that we should be producing up to 75 drums of concentrate daily. In a week, this translates to about two container loads,” he said.

He commended Governor Hyacinth Alia for prioritising industrialisation as a strategy to boost the state’s economy and create employment opportunities for youths.

## I remain authentic chairman of NDC in Enugu —Obetta

**ENUGU**

Mr Ibuchukwu Obetta, has said that he remains the authentic Chairman of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), Enugu State chapter.

Obetta confirmed this in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Enugu.

“I am the chairman of NDC in Enugu State. All issues have been resolved during our National Convention in Abuja,” he said.

He disclosed that the party had concluded its ward, local government and state congresses adding that after the congresses, the NDC in the state was now ready for its primaries set to take place before the end of May.

The chairman said that many aspirants had indicated interest to contest for various positions on the platform of the party.

“We have four persons that have indicated their interest for gubernatorial election in 2027 in the state.

“I cannot disclose their names now for security rea-

sons until after the primaries which will hold at the interval of this month,” he said.

Obetta added that there were also four aspirants for the Enugu North senatorial zone bye election slated for June 20, 2026.

“Now, we have four aspirants who have come out for the Enugu North senatorial district.

“We are discussing with them to find out their mission for the senatorial district,” he said.

He also disclosed that many aspirants from the Enugu West senatorial zone had also indicated interest for various positions including house of assembly, house of representatives, and the Senate.

He described the NDC as a “beautiful bride” in Nigerian politics following the entrance of Mr Peter Obi and Rabiu Kwankwaso to the party as well as the successful completion of its convention.

The state chapter of the party was involved in minor leadership crises shortly before their national convention, where a faction led by one Johnpaul Ani claimed to be the authentic state chairman.

**NEWS****LAGOS**

A leadership crisis within the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) deepened on Monday, following conflicting claims over the legitimate leadership of its Lagos chapter.

The dispute surfaced days after the national leadership publicly reaffirmed Dr Babajide Saheed as chairman of the Lagos branch.

Fresh controversy emerged after a faction within the Lagos chapter announced that Saheed had been removed from office over alleged constitutional violations.

In a statement, the faction said Saheed's removal followed a properly constituted Emergency Gen-

**Lagos NMA leadership crisis deepens**

eral Meeting held on April 18.

The meeting reportedly took place at Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), where members reviewed allegations and alleged infractions against him.

According to the statement, the NMA Congress, described as the association's highest decision-making organ, deliberated extensively before voting on his removal.

"The process was constitutional, valid and in accordance with the association's regulations," the faction stated.

It added that Dr Ewonowo Temidire had assumed office

as chairman, in line with established constitutional provisions.

The faction further declared that Saheed no longer possessed authority to act or correspond on behalf of the Lagos chapter.

It also warned institutions, partners and stakeholders against engaging with him in any official capacity as chairman.

However, the declaration appears to conflict with the national leadership's earlier position on the matter.

During its National Executive Council meeting and Annual General Scientific Conference

in Kano, the national body reaffirmed Saheed's recognition.

The communiqué covered deliberations held between April 26 and May 3 and addressed the leadership status of Lagos.

It stated that the Lagos State Officers Committee under Saheed "remains recognised" by the national association.

The communiqué was signed by Dr Afekhinde Omoti and Dr Tamunokuro Diamond.

Relying on the communiqué, Saheed issued a statement on May 8 reaffirming his position as Lagos chairman.

"The recognition by the national body confirms the legitimacy of our leadership," Saheed said.

The conflicting declarations have now exposed widening divisions within one of the association's most influential state branches.

The development has also raised questions over constitutional authority, legitimacy and control of the association's affairs in Lagos.

In spite of the leadership dispute, both camps insisted that doctors' welfare remained a shared priority.

The faction announcing Saheed's removal also condemned growing cases of harassment and assault against healthcare workers.

"Attacks on doctors and healthcare personnel will not be tolerated under any circumstances," the group warned.

It also expressed concern over delays in salary payments affecting some medical practitioners across the state.

According to the faction, engagements with relevant authorities were ongoing to resolve the welfare concerns.

**APC committed to credible screening process, Says c'ttee chairman****ILORIN**

Prof. Success Musa, the Chairman, Screening Committee, All Progressives Congress (APC), has said that the large number of aspirants seeking elective positions under its umbrella reflected the strength of democracy within the party.

Musa stated this on Monday when addressing APC aspirants during the screening exercise held at the party secretariate in Ilorin.

He assured the members of a credible screening process.

The chairman said that no fewer than 158 aspirants purchased nomination forms for the Kwara State House of Assembly election, describing the development as evidence of the party's popularity and internal democracy.

"This is democracy and that is what APC represents," the committee chairman said.

Musa also said that members of the screening committee were carefully selected based on credibility and integrity to ensure a transparent and seamless exercise.

He said that the committee was determined to avoid mistakes capable of jeopardising the party's victory at the polls.

Musa recalled the experience in Bayelsa where the party lost its mandate following a Supreme Court judgment over qualification issues.

"We do not want such a situation to happen again. That is why we are here to thoroughly screen all aspirants and ensure that all documents are in order," he said.

The committee chairman assured aspirants that the exercise would be conducted fairly and urged them to cooperate with officials.

He also appealed to aggrieved aspirants to channel complaints through the appeal committee set up by the party.

**2027: Ex-INEC Director, Unekwojo, joins Kogi East Senate race****ABUJA**

Mr Ameh Unekwojo, a former Director with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has joined the race for the Kogi East Senatorial seat ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Unekwojo is seeking to represent the district on the platform of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC).

Odokina Ojoma, the Director of Media for the Unekwojo Campaign Organisation, said in a statement on Monday in Abuja that the people of Kogi East were set to witness a new wave of experienced, credible and people-focused representation.

Ojoma quoted Unekwojo as saying, shortly after his declaration, that he remained dedicated to selfless service.

He pledged to work for the unity, progress and prosperity of the people if elected.

Ojoma noted that after more than two decades of meritorious service at INEC, Unekwojo

was bringing a wealth of experience in governance and public service into the political arena.

"Unekwojo's decision to contest is driven by a strong commitment to deliver effective representation, attract meaningful development and restore the confidence of the people in responsible leadership," Ojoma said.

The media director added that the candidate's campaign would focus on some key areas including youth empowerment, agriculture, food security, education and infrastructure development.

He also listed job creation and transparent representation as core pillars of the Unekwojo mandate.

According to him, community stakeholders and political observers have described Unekwojo's entrance into the race as timely.

Ojoma further noted that Unekwojo's integrity and deep understanding of the Nigerian political system positioned him as a candidate capable of effectively advancing the interests of the district.

**AMUPITAN'S VISIT TO NYSC:**

Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan (L), receiving a souvenir from the NYSC Director-General, Brig.-Gen. Olakunle Nafu, during Amupitan's visit to the NYSC National Directorate Headquarters in Abuja on Monday.

**Police arrest 2 suspected vandals in A'lbom****UYO**

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom says it has arrested two suspected vandals along the Calabar - Itu highway.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Timfom John, disclosed this in a statement in Uyo on Monday.

John said the suspected vandals were involved in looting and theft of items from an accidented truck along the Cala-

bar-Itu highway.

She said that on Sunday at about 22: 00hrs, operatives of the command received credible intelligence through a tricycle operator regarding the activities of the criminal elements, who were vandalising a truck.

The PPRO said the police operatives mobilised to the scene and successfully arrested one suspect in possession of four suspected stolen truck tyres.

John said further investiga-

tion led to the arrest of the tricycle operator, who was allegedly used to convey the stolen items from the scene.

"The suspects are currently in Police custody, while efforts are ongoing to apprehend other fleeing accomplices connected to the criminal act," she said.

She quoted the state Commissioner of Police, Baba Azare, as warning criminal elements to desist from exploiting accident scenes for acts of vandalism, looting, and theft.

Azare also said that the command would continue to strengthen surveillance and deploy intelligence-driven policing strategies to safeguard lives and property across the state.

"The command appreciates members of the public, who continue to provide timely and credible information to the police.

"We also encourage residents to remain law-abiding and security conscious at all times," he said.

**Borno govt enrolls 2,700 environmental vanguards in healthcare scheme****MAIDUGURI**

The Borno State Contributory Healthcare Management Agency (BOSCHMA) on Monday commenced the enrolment of 2,700 Frontline environmental vanguards for free basic primary healthcare services in the state.

Dr Saleh Abba, the Executive Secretary of BOSCHMA, made this known at the enrolment launch in Maiduguri.

The scheme, under the Federal and State Governments' initiative, was designed to provide free medical services to low-level workers working

under the Borno State Environmental, Sanitation, and Protection Agency (BOSEPA).

Abba said that BOSCHMA was expected to enrol at least 2,700 environmental vanguards in addition to their family members which would raise the number of enrollees drawn from Maiduguri Metropolitan and Jere Council Areas to about 5,000.

The executive secretary said that once enrolled, the workers and their families would be able to access free medical services at primary and secondary healthcare facilities within their residential areas.

Abba said that the free

healthcare services were not limited to the workers but were extended to their families, children, husbands, wives and even parents who are elderly and above the age of 65.

He noted that the environmental vanguards were actually working under a very hazardous situation facing a lot of waste materials that they interacted with hence the need to have proper medical care.

"You can see the temperature is up to 40 degrees now. Whenever you go out in the morning, the first people that you will see in the environment are these people, so we felt it is actually

the responsibility of the state to also provide these services for them, not only them, and also extend it to their immediate families," he said.

Abba also spoke about the achievement of the agency which he said had recorded over 200,000 people under formal sector registration across the 27 Local Government Areas of the state.

Also speaking, the Managing Director of BOSEPA, Mr Abubakar Suleiman, expressed appreciation to the state and federal governments, especially BOSCHMA for making the enrolment a reality.

# Court dismisses Fubara's suit challenging APC congress, awards N20m fine

**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Monday dismissed a suit instituted by Mr Fubara Dagogo, a member of the All Progressives Congress (APC), seeking to void the party's recently conducted national congress.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, in a judgment, held that the court lacked the jurisdiction to entertain the case, which bordered on the internal affairs of a political party.

Justice Abdulmalik held that issues surrounding candidates'

nomination and purchase of nomination form, including expression of interest form, are non-justiciable.

The judge, who struck out the suit, awarded a N10 million fine each against Dagogo and his lawyer, making a total of N20 million, in favour of all the four defendants.

Dagogo, an aspirant in the recently concluded APC national congress, had filed the suit to challenge his alleged exclusion from the party's national convention election.

The plaintiff, through his lawyer, Ogochukwu Onyema,

named APC and Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, party's National Chairman, as 1st and 2nd defendants.

Dagogo also listed Victor Giadom, party's National Vice Chairman, South South, and Sulaiman Muiamma, APC's National Organising Secretary, as 3rd and 4th defendants respectively.

In the originating summons, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/591/2026 dated March 22 and filed March 23 by his lawyer, Dagogo sought six reliefs.

The aggrieved aspirant prayed the court to nullify the outcome of any party's national congress for the position of National Vice Chairman, South South, without his physical participation.

He urged the judge to determine whether there could be a legitimate zonal congress for South South APC with his alleged unlawful exclusion after he was duly cleared and paid for his expression of interest (EoI) and nomination forms.

He prayed the court to declare that by virtue of APC's Payment Acknowledgment Receipt No. 26827 dated March 13 and issued to him, he is entitled to be issued with the requisite EoI and Nomination Forms as an aspirant for the position of National Vice Chairman, South—South Nigeria.

He equally prayed the court to award a general damages of N100 million against the 3rd

and 4th defendants for the dis-comfitures, embarrassments and mental torture, they occasioned to him with their ill conduct.

But the APC, in its earlier preliminary objection filed by the former lawyer, Kayode Okunade, urged the court to strike out or dismiss the suit for want of jurisdiction.

Okunade also prayed the court for an order striking out the originating summons filed by Dagogo as incompetent.

The lawyer, in his eight-ground argument, said the subject matter of the suit bordered on the internal affairs of a political party, which was non-justiciable and outside the jurisdiction of the court.

## Man, 29, jailed 3yrs for stealing N728,000 building materials

**SANGO-OTA (OGUN)**

An Ota Magistrates' Court in Ogun, on Monday, sentenced one Thomas Olamilekan, 29, to two years in the correctional centre for breaking into a house to steal cable wires, glazed window frames and other items worth N728,000.

The Magistrate, Mrs O.O. Fadairo, sentenced the convict to two years imprisonment with an option of N100,000 fine.

She said that the prosecution had proven its case beyond reasonable doubts that Olamilekan was guilty of the

charge brought against him.

During trial, the Prosecutor, ASP E.O. Adaraloye, told the court that the convict committed the offences on May 3, at Tewogbade Street, Ayomikun CDA, Off Baba Ekiti Ntabo, Ijoko, Ota.

Adaraloye said that the convict broke into the residence of one Opeyemi Onanuga, and stole cable wires, Aluminum glass window and other items worth

N728,000. He said that the offences contravened Sections 390(9) and 411(1) of the Criminal Code, Laws of Ogun, 2006.

## 6 in court over alleged public nuisance, breach of peace

**ADO-EKITI**

Six persons were on Monday arraigned before an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court over alleged public nuisance and breach of peace.

The defendants: Hassan Yahaya, 20, Ayuba Adamu, 40; Abayomi Tolulope, 30; Afolabi Olamide, 26; Rilwan Adedeji, 30 and Sunday Oso, 33, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecutor, ASP Akinwale Oriyomi, told the court that the defendants committed the offence at about 9.00p.m on

May 3 in Ado-Ekiti.

He said that the defendants conducted themselves in a manner likely to cause breach of peace by constituting public nuisance.

Oriyomi said the offence contravened Section 181(1) (d) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

He urged the court to adjourn the case to enable him to study the case file and assemble witnesses.

Counsel to the defendants, Mr Oluwafemi Alabi, urged the court to grant the defendants bail, and promised that they would not jump bail.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Abayomi Adeosun, granted the defendants bail in the sum of N50,000 with one surety each in like sum, and adjourned the case till June 26 for hearing.



**2026 MINISTERIAL NEWS CONFERENCE:**

L-R: Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry Transportation, Mr Wale Musa; Commissioner for Transportation, Mr Oluwaseun Osiyemi, and Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Information and Strategy, Mr Olanrewaju Bajulaye, during Lagos State Government 2026 Ministerial News Conference by the Ministry of Transportation in commemoration of the seventh year in office of Governor Sanwo-Olu in Lagos on Monday.

## Court remands 24-year-old man over alleged murder

**ADO-EKITI**

An Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court on Monday, remanded a 24-year-old man, Bilad Idris, in a correctional centre over the alleged murder of one Mohammed Gali.

The Prosecutor, ASP Akin-

wale Oriyomi, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on May 3 at Aisegba-Ekiti.

Oriyomi alleged that Idris murdered Gali during a fight.

He said that the defendant and the deceased, said to be friends, engaged in a fight during which Idris allegedly struck Gali on the head with a plank,

resulting in his death.

According to the prosecutor, the offence contravenes Section 234 of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

Since the plea of the defendant was not taken, Oriyomi prayed the court to remand him in a correctional centre pending legal advice from the

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

In his ruling, the Chief Magistrate, Mr Abayomi Adeosun, granted the request and ordered that the defendant be remanded in a correctional centre pending legal advice.

Adeosun adjourned the case until June 8 for mention.

## Iguovbiobo elders back Oba Ewuare II, dismiss bribery claims over Odionwere tussle

MONDAY OISE

Elders and residents of Iguovbiobo community in Uhumwonde Local Government Area of Edo State have lauded the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin for stepping into the lingering Odionwere dispute and restoring calm in the community.

At an enlarged meeting of the community, elders, including Pa Jonathan Osagie, Pa John Agbonlahor and Mr David Omoruyi said that they convened the gathering to ap-

preciate the Benin monarch for his wisdom and decisive handling of the matter.

They disclosed that the Oba directed the two elders contesting the Odionwere position to appear at the palace with their first sons to swear to an oath that would determine who is truly the eldest.

The elders also rejected allegations circulating on social media that some chiefs received bribes in connection with the dispute, describing the claims as false, misleading and capable of causing unrest in the community.

"We were still waiting for

the two elders contesting for the Odionwere position when some persons who do not mean well for the community went on social media to cast aspersions with the intention of causing problems," they said.

The community leaders urged residents and the general public to ignore the allegations, insisting that the people accepted the palace ruling and remained committed to peace.

They added that anyone convinced of his claim to the position should obey the palace directive and take the required oath.

The Okaighele of Iguovbiobo, Mr Austin Evbuowan, also

praised the Oba of Benin for restoring peace in the community through his intervention.

Evbuowan condemned what he called unfounded allegations against some chiefs on social media and urged all parties involved in the dispute to respect the palace ruling in the interest of lasting peace.

He further alleged that those opposing the oath-taking process had resorted to social media campaigns to create tension in the community.

He appealed to those spreading bribery allegations against some chiefs to stop the publications and allow peace to reign in Iguovbiobo community.

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS GLADYS ABUMERE**, now wish to be known as **MRS. GLADYS SEIN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

### REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OLYVIA JOSEPH ADI**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ADI OLYVIA TAKA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

### CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EMOKHA JOHN NOSA** and **EMOKHA JOHN NOSAKHARE**, are one and the same person. I now wish to be known as **EMOKHA JOHN NOSA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

### CHANGE OF NAME

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

### ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OSUNBOR DAVID NOWAMAGBE** and **NOWAMAGBE DAVID**, are one and the same person. I now wish to be known as **OSUNBOR DAVID NOWAMAGBE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

### CORRECTION OF NAME

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

### REMOVAL OF NAME

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

**NEWS**

# 11 Plc charts new growth path as shareholders approve N9.50 dividend

**ABUJA**

A new sense of direction is taking shape at 11 Plc, following the unveiling of an ambitious growth plan by its Acting Managing Director, Mr. Osagie Ogedegbe, who used the company's 48th Annual General Meeting in Abuja to assure shareholders of stronger performance, wider market reach and improved returns in the coming years.

Speaking during his first AGM appearance since assuming office on April 1, 2026, Ogedegbe said that the company was entering a more determined phase of growth, with plans to become more competitive, more efficient and more

responsive to market realities.

He told shareholders that the focus going forward would be on boosting sales, improving revenue and ultimately delivering better dividends.

"We intend to be more active in the marketplace, drive volumes, grow revenue and deliver stronger returns to our shareholders," he said, expressing confidence in the company's direction.

The new Acting Managing Director also reassured stakeholders that the company would not compromise on quality, particularly the Mobil lubricants produced in Nigeria, which he said would continue to meet global standards without exception.

According to him, the company's long-standing operational discipline and quality systems are

rooted in the professional training culture inherited from ExxonMobil, which will continue to guide decision-making and performance.

Ogedegbe said that the next phase of growth would be anchored on efficiency, innovation and expansion into new opportunities, while also strengthening inclusion and equal opportunity within the organisation

to attract and retain top talent.

He added that service delivery across all segments, including fuel retail, lubricants and industrial supply would remain a key priority, with renewed attention on customer experience, reliability and consistency.

Beyond internal improvements, he noted that the company is positioning itself to respond better to changes in the downstream sector and build a more resilient business capable

of sustained growth.

"11 Plc is aligning itself for stronger performance and long-term value creation. The goal is a more resilient organisation that continues to reward shareholders while strengthening its leadership position in the industry," he said.

Shareholders at the meeting responded positively to the outlook, unanimously approving a dividend of N9.50 per share for the financial year ended December 31, 2025.

Many of them commended the company for maintaining steady dividend payments despite challenges in the oil and gas sector, describing it as a sign of discipline and reliability.

Speaking on behalf of the Confluence Shareholders Association, Imam Mohammed Atanda praised the company's consistency, while Moses Igbrude of the Independent Shareholders Association expressed optimism about its growth trajectory.

## Suspended Enogie, natives accuse ex-police officer of massive land grab in Eso community

**BENIN CITY**

Tension is mounting in Eso Community, Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State, following allegations of large-scale land grabbing levelled against a retired police officer, Mr. Daniel Aruagbon, in a dispute that has split opinion among indigenes and elders.

The suspended Enogie of Eso, Pa Moses Omobude, alongside other community leaders and family representatives, has accused Aruagbon of unlawfully taking over extensive farmlands belonging to families in the area, amid growing calls for urgent intervention by traditional and government authorities.

Addressing elders at a community meeting, Pa Omobude alleged that the retired officer seized more than 500 hectares of family land and an additional 300 hectares belonging to the late Pa Peter Asenoguan, while he was under suspension as Enogie of the community.

He further claimed that the disputed lands were subsequently allocated to relatives of the former police officer, deepening tensions within the agrarian community.

Pa Omobude also lamented what he described as official

inaction, alleging that repeated reports to the police did not yield any response.

"The police failed to act even after we raised the alarm over what is happening to our ancestral lands," he said.

At the meeting, some indigenes, including Monday Asenoguan and Iserhierien Ukporefe, strongly backed the allegations, describing the situation as an "unacceptable encroachment" on communal heritage.

They called on the Benin Monarch and other relevant authorities to intervene urgently to prevent further escalation.

"This former police officer has gravely encroached on our lands. We want the palace to step in and restore peace before it gets out of hand," one of the speakers said.

However, in a swift reaction, Mr. Aruagbon denied all allegations levelled against him, insisting that he did not unlawfully acquire or allocate any community land.

He maintained that the claims were unfounded, but did not provide further details.

Despite the denial, the aggrieved natives insisted that only the intervention of the Benin Monarch and constituted authorities can resolve the deepening dispute and restore lasting peace to the community.

**48TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:**

L-R: Group Executive Director, Finance, 11 Plc (formerly Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc), Ramesh Virwani; Acting Managing Director, Osagie Ogedegbe; Non-Executive Director, Abdulkadir Aminu; Company Secretary, Samuel Ozeh; Non-Executive Director, Paul Obi; and Independent Non-Executive Director, Nurudeen Abubakar, during the company's 48th Annual General Meeting held in Abuja.

## Edo Commissioner rallies youths for 230m digital jobs

**BENIN CITY**

Edo State Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy, Ohimai Ehijimotor, has urged youths in the state to equip themselves with digital and technological skills needed to compete for an estimated 230 million jobs expected to emerge globally by 2030.

Speaking at the InspireX Summit 3.0 held at the University of Benin, the commissioner warned that millions of opportunities emerging within the global digital space could bypass Nigerian youths if they fail to position themselves strategically.

The summit, themed "Em-

powering the Next Generation: Leadership, Innovation and Energy for Africa's Future," brought together students, innovators, development partners and technology enthusiasts to discuss the role of innovation in shaping Africa's future workforce. The programme also enjoyed the support of the United Nations Development Programme.

Delivering the keynote address, Ehijimotor cited projections by the World Bank indicating that about 230 million digital jobs are expected to emerge globally by 2030, stressing that Edo youths must not remain spectators in the unfolding technological revolution.

"Are Edo youths ready to

fill this space, or will others across Sub-Saharan Africa take the opportunities meant for them?" he asked.

The commissioner urged students to embrace digital skills, innovation and entrepreneurship, noting that future leadership and economic relevance would be determined largely by technological competence and creativity.

He said the Edo State Government was already laying the foundation for a thriving digital ecosystem, revealing that Edo had become the first sub-national government in Nigeria to own a functional data centre.

According to him, the facility would soon be opened for collaboration with private

sector partners to deepen digital infrastructure, innovation and investment opportunities across the state.

Ehijimotor further charged participants to adopt a bold and proactive mindset capable of driving transformation across Africa.

"Be the generation that stops waiting for permission and starts building with the opportunities already before you," he said.

The InspireX Summit 3.0 served as a platform for inspiring young Nigerians towards innovation-driven leadership and reinforcing the growing importance of digital transformation in Africa's economic future.

## Revised bidding document boosts transparency, accountability in MDAs- BPP D-G

**ABUJA**

Dr Adebawale Adedokun, Director-General, Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), says the revised Standard Bidding Document (SBD) has improved transparency, accountability and compliance in Nigeria's public procurement system.

Adedokun stated this in an interview with newsmen in Abuja. He said the reform had also

enhanced bidders' confidence, introduced standard operating procedures and made monitoring of procurement activities easier across government institutions.

"One of the key successes of the revised Standard Bidding Document is that everyone now understands that failure to use the approved document renders the contract invalid.

"It has improved transparency, enhanced visibility, strengthened bidders' confi-

dence and introduced standard operating procedures into procurement activities," he said.

The BPP boss recalled that before the reforms, many government agencies conducted procurement processes without following uniform procedures.

He said some contractors even prepared their own bidding documents, making it difficult to assess compliance, specifications and performance.

The D-G said the current

reforms had made it easier to track procurement activities and ensure compliance with extant laws and guidelines.

"Today, it is easy to ask any government agency which procurement document it used and whether it complied with the laid down procedures."

He added that the bureau had intensified enforcement and sensitisation to ensure all procurement entities comply with the approved standards.

Adedokun added that the revised SBD had become an important tool for capacity building among procurement officers.

According to him, many procurement officers previously lacked adequate knowledge of the document and its application because enforcement was weak.

He said the bureau has intensified training and sensitisation to ensure procurement officers understand and apply the document.

"We are now educating procurement officers on the proper use and issuance of the SBD. Both the end users and the operators, let us all be on the same page.

"Our goal is to ensure law and order in procurement processes through standardization and strict compliance."

The D-G stressed that only the BPP was authorised to issue the official SBD, warning that any other version in circulation was illegal.

## Davido to be inducted into Black Music Walk of Fame

Afrobeat superstar, David Adeleke, popularly known as Davido has been named an inductee for the 2026 Black Music and Entertainment Walk of Fame in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States.

The organisers announced Davido as part of this year's class ahead of the induction ceremony scheduled for June 1st, 2026 in Atlanta's Historic westside.

The recognition places Davido alongside entertainment figures to be honoured for their influence on Black culture and global music.

The feat will no doubt add the "Timeless" crooner to the African artists previously recognised by the organisation including late Afrobeat legend, Fela Kuti.

The Black music Entertainment Walk of Fame was created by the Black American music Association and the Georgia Entertainment caucus to honour people who have shaped Black entertainment and music.

It recognised Black entertainers and cultural figures who have influenced music and entertainment around the world with inductees receiving plaques placed along the walk way in Atlanta in recognition of their

impact on Black culture.

Davido's recognition is coming at a time he is marking his 15 years on stage as a music star.

Davido, born in Atlanta, Georgia began his music career professionally in 2011 and started working on his debut studio album "omo baba olowo" a moisture of Afrobeat and hip hop.

He made his debut album as a member of the KB international and rose to fame after releasing "Dami Duro" the second

single from "omo baba olowo" (2012).

Within a decade and half, Davido has delivered several hit records including five studio albums namely, "omo baba olowo" (2012), A Good Time (2019), A Better Time (2020), Timeless (2023), and 5ive (2025).

He has secured several nominations and awards on the global stage with three nominations at the 66th annual Grammy awards (2024), including Best Global music Album for "Timeless".



DAVIDO

## Rema set to headline 2026 world cup

Popularly Nigerian musician, Rema is set to headline the 2026 world cup in Los Angeles.

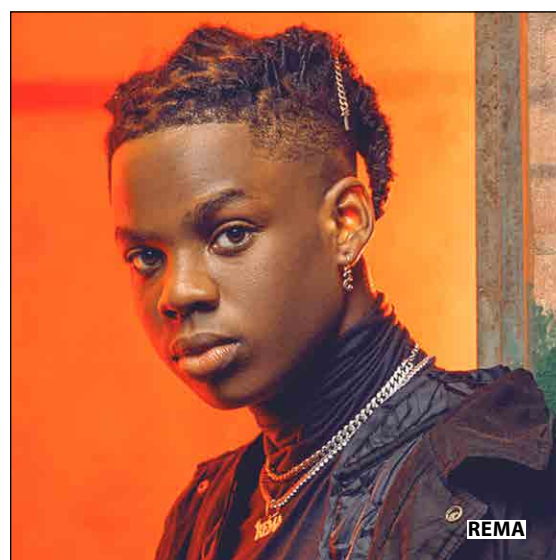
The world football governing body FIFA made this known in an Instagram post while unveiling the line up artistes scheduled to perform at the global football event.

The singer is bid to perform at the world cup opening ceremony on June 12, 2026, alongside Lisa Katy Perry, Tyla, Future and Anitta.

"This lineup of artistes reflects the cultural diversity of the United States and vibrancy of its many diasporas, highlighting the nation's rich influence on music, entertainment and pop culture while showcasing the power of music to bring people together across the country" fifa wrote.

Reports also has it that "Dai Dai" the tournament's official anthem performed by Burna Boy and Shakira is scheduled for release on May 14, 2026.

The world cup final will feature its first super Bowl - style halftime show, curated by Coldplay's Chris Martin on July 19, 2026.



REMA

## 'Amapiano' more lucrative than rap — Shallipopi claims

Nigerian rapper and singer, Shallipopi has revealed why he decided to switch from rap music to singing 'Amapiano'.



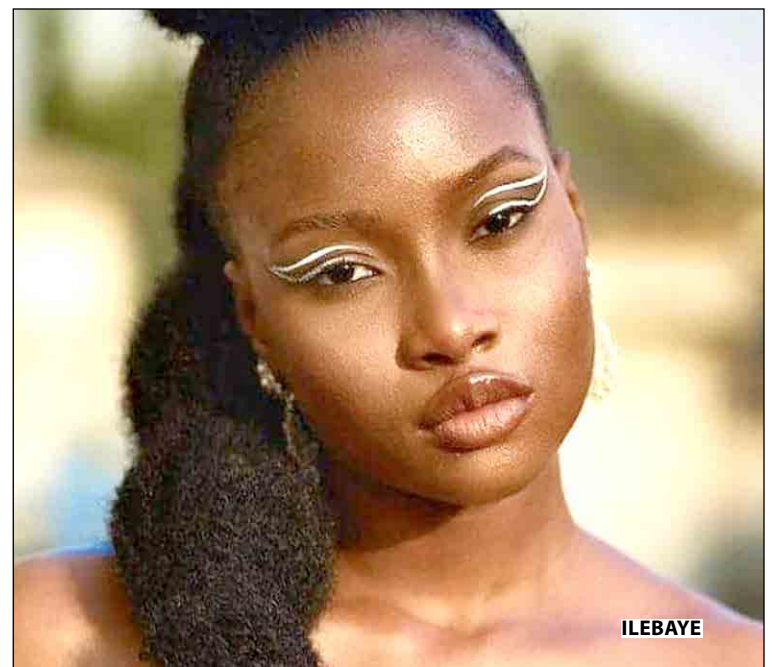
SHALLIPOPI

Featuring in a recent episode of Afrobeat intelligence podcast, the "cast hitmaker" explained that he was originally a rap star but embraced 'Amapiano' for financial reasons.

According to him " 'Amapiano' is more lucrative than rap music, I have been rapping for a while. I am a rap star but they made me do 'Amapiano' and that as at now is bringing more food to the table, so we will do it and drag it with them".

Shallipopi said rap was his first love, but he struggled to make a fortune from it partly due to Nigerian music fans' orientation and lack of support.

On why he rejected the Headies award for Best Rap Song which was won by his song last year, Shallipopi said he rejected the award because the organisers attempted to box him as just a rapper, insisting that they should have given that awards in both singing and rapping categories.



ILEBAYE

## Alleged domestic violence: Ex-BBNaija winner, Ilebaye cries out for help

Former winner of Big Brother Naija reality show, (BBNaija), Ilebaye has called on the general public for help over domestic violence and physical assault.

Ilebaye, who was seen with a swollen face cried for help at midnight on Friday at her Instagram Livestream.

A trending video of the Livesreaming and crying for help, surface on social media when a man believed to be his father was seen brutally beating and physically assaulting her in

the background.

Speaking amid the incident, the actress was heard saying 'Nigerians help, I need to go, I need to leave this house, I'm being locked up. I'm tired of assault, please help, come and help me" she streamed in the viral video. No

Reacting to the scary incident, BB-Naija's Tacha in a video on her Instagram story called on anyone in Abuja to help her lead the police to Ilebaye's house to rescue her.

## 2026 AMVCA: Again, Lisabi wins Best indigenous language film

Lisabi, a movie by actors Lateef Adedimeji and Mobimpe has won the best indigenous language film ( west Africa) award at the 12th edition of the Africa magic viewers choice Awards (AMVCA).

This year's edition of the award ceremony was held on Saturday May 9, 2026 at Eko Hotel and suites in La-

gos.

Receiving the award, Lateef dedicated the award to his wife, Mobimpe who gave birth to triplets a week again after five years of marriage.

According him " this award is dedicated to the woman who made me chase my dream, the woman who gave me my three kings".



LATEEF ADEDIMEJI AND WIFE, MOBIMPE, 2026 AMVCA WINNER

# ArtsWorld with Francis Odupe 08023680030

## Govt should give subventions for art promotion —Dr. Bruce Onobrakpeya

**May we meet you sir?**

— I'm Bruce Onobrakpeya. I am the chairman of Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation (BOF). What you see here is a dream, a vision I had many years ago, because I have attended similar institutions, both in Nigeria and abroad, and going back to sixteen to seventeen years now, we have been coming here, sometimes once or twice a year, some times several times a year, just to practice Art in order to make sure that both professionals and beginners in the Art grew and that the Art of the country takes preeminence, takes a very, very noble place that our Art in the past has put Nigeria. So, what you see now is just an afternoon when someone from outside, from a tertiary institution, has come to interact with us who are in an informal education system. So that is we and that is where we are.

**Sir, we learnt that the workshop is ending tomorrow. It has been on for how many days now and how has it been?**

Well, it's usually a two-week workshop; when we have money, we can do several sessions but this session is divided into two, two weeks. We started on the 23rd of February and we're ending on the 7th of March.

**So far what do you think is the response of people and their reactions to this workshop?**

Oh well, people have been very enthusiastic, I mean very enthusiastic people; they like what they see here very much... what they do here very much. What is interesting is that we have people who have been coming here within the last eight, nine years. They have been coming here every time we have this workshop. And then we have even new people. And when you move round the entire structure here you see people working and working with all zeal, they are very much interested, and in fact when it is time for us to go, people don't want to go, because they still want to work. So, that is this place.

**Some people feel that this workshop has not been given enough publicity through the media. What are you doing about it so that more people will be aware of this workshop?**

Well, you see, what is happening is that we had some help from the Ford Foundation two years after we started. But Ford Foundation later changed their policy and right now we don't have any financial partner. We have people who give us advice, who encourage us, but real financial partners we don't have now. And so if we take more than we have now, it's not possible for us to cater for because the fees they pay is heavily subsidized



BRUCE ONOBRAKPEYA, NIGERIA'S VISUAL ARTS ICON

by BOF, and so the more people come in here the more money we have to find to subsidize them, so for us it becomes economical to keep the number down as it is now until we find partners who will be supporting us financially.

**This kind of effort is complimenting the Government's effort in empowering the youths economically. In what way do you think the**

**government can be of help to this project?**

Well, in plenty ways. ...the government should give us outright subventions. Subventions; give us money to help run the place—that's the primary thing. And then give us money also to develop the structures. For instance, you are here, this make-shift library, you will see what we called hall, but you will see the main building there and we have chalets where the people stay. Now we

have acquired land on the other side; we need money to build it, to put up a proper workshop, to build a conference hall, to build a library and to build chalets so that we can make sure that this place as it is, can be operational all year round. But at least six months of the year, it's active. If we get the money this place will be operational all the year round in artistic learning, artistic production and so on. Although right now, this premise is open all year round. Because we have works there in the gallery that people come to see; they draw people into this town. Tourists come to see those works, schoolchildren come in when we're not here, to see these works and other people; filmmakers, musicians and so on use our premises, Church groups, young people and so on use the premises for picnics. So the place is useful all year round, but we want the workshop situation itself to be active all the year round.

**Assuming other like minds, NGOs or artist bodies want to partner with you on mutually beneficial terms, in what ways can they do that?**

Well, they come and then we share the responsibilities, they help financially and now and again they help us in our developments and their names will be amplified and...

**Recently you were given a national award. Many people said it was a well-deserved award. What is your feeling about it all?**

First of all, I thank God, His work in my life; He's given me talent which he has helped me to develop. And then I thank my colleagues, other artists, for whom I earned the award. I thank members of my family who have stood before me all along, helping me to work and don't grudge me if the money we should use for family is put here [BOF]. I thank them. Also I thank the Nigerian environment, particularly the Lagos environment where I'm staying for very, very many years; and the Lagos environment has been very, very good in putting me in... not distracting me from the direction of artistic creativity. I thank the media people who have amplified what I have created and made a lot of people know about Art and have brought in new value into the Art.

**Sir, how can this award spur you up to greater heights in promoting Art?**

Well, the spurring is what you see now. I have a new director. The director has been working for two years and I can safely stay away now and let that director work without my coming here. But because of this award and because of the interest that I have for Art promotion in Nigeria, I still come around to make one input or the other.

## Tips for taking pro-level photos with your smartphone

MARGARET LOONEY

**Y**ou don't need to invest in high-priced photography equipment to nail the perfect shot.

During a live video chat, The Wall Street Journal asked three professional photographers to share their opinions as they reviewed the stand-out reader-submitted Instagram pics of 2013.

Moderated by WSJ Deputy Photo Director Taylor Umlauf, the chat featured staff photojournalist for Getty Images Andrew Burton, former community manager at NBC News and photographer Anthony Quintano and freelance photographer Daniella Zalzman.

From composing a shot to capturing the right moment, these tips will have you

tagging #nofilter on more of your images.

### Capturing the moment

When it comes to memorialising a moment like the one in the picture below (seemingly edited with Hipstamatic), Burton suggests finding the subject and then simply being patient. "You have to know what you want to photograph and go looking for it," he said. "In journalism school when you're taking photo classes, they'll teach you to compose a frame and wait for the moment to happen. That's what this photo looks like - it's very controlled and well-composed."

### Experimenting with advanced techniques

The picture below is a take on a dou-

ble-exposure image. While Zalzman points out that the image isn't a true double-exposure shot, she suspects the photographer used an app to overlay one image on top of the other. Her favourite app for creating this effect is Image Blender, which lets you overlay images, scratch through and reveal parts of a picture and export images at full size. While the app may not be appropriate for straight news photos, it could be useful when a more whimsical image is appropriate.

### Finding the right exposure

For sunset and scenic shots alike, Zalzman offers a tip on choosing the exposure (quantity of light) you seek. "When you're shooting with an iPhone, you can tap anywhere on the screen

when you're in camera mode, and it'll expose to whatever you just hit," she said. So in the image below, she suggests tapping near the purples and blues to keep the soft-toned light and retain all detail of the paddle-boarder.

### Embracing the wild and "glitchy"

Not only a prime example of enigmatic light and composition, the image below is a shot that couldn't be easily captured with top-notch tools. "This is a good example of images that sometimes you can only make with an iPhone, whereas the professional equipment we use is a little too precise and a little too exact sometimes," Zalzman said. "The joy of smartphones is that sometimes it's a little wild and a little glitchy."

### Finding a unique angle

The Cloud Gate is an oft-captured tourist attraction for Chicago visitors, but the unique angle below took extra effort. "For the average user a lot of people don't take the time and effort that pro-Instagram users do," Quintano said. "For myself, I'm always looking. I'm always looking at different angles. I'm getting on the ground, climbing fences, different stuff to try and get something that isn't normally taken by a tourist. And I think that's what makes images like this happen."

*IJNet Editorial Assistant, Margaret Looney, writes about the latest media trends, reporting tools and journalism resources.*

# Entertainment

= with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe =

## THE DEATH OF CREATIVITY

IZEGAEGBE DAVIDSON IMOSIME

The road to creativity passes so close to the madhouse and often detours or ends there. Man cannot endure his own littleness unless he can translate it into meaningfulness on the largest possible level." - Ernest Becker -

In the structural design of the human spirit, the "poise" is not merely a synonym for grace or physical balance, like many would think and who says they are not right in their own evaluation? Another school of thought also see the poise as the steady-state of the soul, that silence; like the lips of the wind against the sea tide, that quiet, expectant equilibrium from which all original thoughts of ours emerge. Again, can we say these people are not on the path of truth or facts? However, imagine the moment of relaxed-tension before the archer releases the string to let the anxious arrow; just like the silence in the theater before the first note is struck in a symphony, or the follow spot illuminates a part of the center stage waiting for what follows next. Do you know that, in the hyper-accelerated landscape of the 21st century, we like the blind man straining his ears to catch the tiniest sound of incoming vehicle to avoid death, are witnessing what can only be described as the Crucifixion of Poises? We are now systematically dismantling the mental stillness required for creativity, and replacing the once fertile void of imagination with the sterile noise of constant consumption.

When poise dies, a lot happens. It becomes like a twin who watches his twin die in front of him. When poise dies, creativity does not simply slow down like a car before the traffic, it undergoes a terminal transformation into mere production. To understand this type of creative virus that can bring death to creative abilities, we must first examine the cross upon which our collective poise is going to be hung, if we are patient enough to be good by-standers. After all is the long wait not necessary?

The modern creatives are no longer that gardener; they are factory workers on digital assembly line. Do we not know that creativity requires incubation, a process that is inherently inefficient? Even when Ideas need to rot, ferment, and eventually bloom, still, the current Economy Halt demands a kind of immediacy. Do you know that once a thought is not instantly tweetable, a painting cannot be reels-ready in fifteen seconds, a melody does not hook the listener within the first three bars, or a film cannot hold its audience in the first five minutes, it is discarded instantly by the same people these creative ideas were made for? It might sound weird but these are pressures that happen to creatives and their creativities subconsciously everyday. This pressure creates an immeasurable psychic franticness. Have we not traded the poise of deep focus for the twitch of notification?

Many may see this experience as an attempt to find the exit door in a dark labyrinth, while searching for Loss of Boredom. Historically, hope we know that boredom was the gateway to the subconscious, especially when the mind is under-stimulated, and then begins to invent? Again, how do we strangle the nursery of original thoughts? Of course, we do that by filling every spare micro-second with a screen. When we do just that, we have successfully eradicated boredom. In doing this, does it improve creativity flow from within us?

I am strongly opinionated about the understanding of what creativity is. I see it as the act of connecting two previously unrelated dots, and you know how that would be. I believe that creativity thrives on dissonance, shock, and the avant-garde. But again, the algorithms has its own understanding of creativity. This is visible when you notice that algorithms that govern our dig-



ERNEST BECKER

ital lives are designed differently but specifically to eliminate dissonance from creativity. They feed us more of what we already like, effectively trapping the creative mind in a hall of mirrors. Again, what is dissonance in creativity? It is that tension which exists when two or more clashing ideas, styles, or you could say perspectives which occupy the same space. While dissonance often carries a negative connotation in social settings (as conflict) or music (as harshness), in the creative world, it is a necessary primary engine for innovation. Do we need it in creativity? Yes. Do we need algorithms to be programmed to see the arts and its creative culture different? Of course YES!

By ultimately following the data-driven path of "what works and what works not," we have intentionally sacrifice the poise of the individual creative voice. At that point, the creator stops asking, "What is true?" and simply steps up to starts asking, "What will the algorithm promote?" This is the cross on which death of the soul in art; the replacement of the muse with a metric is nailed.

There was once a time when the creative hobby of the creatives was a shrine, a quiet private space where you may wind up a mediocre, experimental, and of course totally free. Sadly nowadays, our supposed "Side Hustle" culture now insists with firm eyes and tight lips that every creative impulse be monetized. Do not get me wrong, I do not hate monetization but talking about when creativity is domesticated like chickens being raised for sales to the bidders. Once the dreamer is told to build a "Personal Brand", the internal creative spark is immediately converted into a commercial product, and at that moment, the poise of creativity is lost. A play for instance is essential for creativity because its creativity allows for productive failure, but the moment a price tag is attached to every draft, then failure becomes a financial liability rather than a creative breakthrough. We have turned our internal sanctuaries into marketplaces, and the resulting stress has paralyzed the very imagination we sought to profit from.

The most profound casualty in the crucifixion of poises on the cross is the Liminal Space. This is the "in-between" time; the quiet walk to the bus stop, the quiet hot plate of Akamu and Akara, the staring out of a window to children kicking plastic cans as football inside the pouring rain.

These, of course, are the moments where the subconscious processes the world like a camera capturing action objects. In these gaps, poise exists. It is a state of being un-busy but all-present. Nowadays, these spaces have been colonized by data. We listen to podcasts at 2x speed while we walk; we check emails in the molue. We have become our own monsters, terrified of the silence of our own minds. However, without these gaps, the creative battery would never recharge. We are running on the fumes of exhausted tropes and this is because we no longer have that quietude required by us to perceive something new.

If creativity is discovered not to have died yet, its resuscitation would immediately requires a radical act of rebellion. It would requires of us to descend from the cross of productivity and reclaim our right to stillness from the standpoint of onlookers waiting for the death of creativity. And to find poise again, one must intentionally decouple from the digital nervous system. It must be forbidden to see it as just a digital detox, but rather as a commitment to mental sovereignty. This would mean then, sitting with a problem until it becomes uncomfortable, and then sitting with it longer until the breakthrough arrives.

We must as creatives and lovers of creativity defend the right to create things that have no market value. The most revolutionary thing a modern human can do is create something beautiful, share it with no one, and sell it to no one. Did great unknown painters not do this and years after their departure, their paintings are being searched for by art thieves around the globe, because of their creative value? This of course would restore the internal equilibrium, the poise, which allows creativity to be an act of love rather than an act of labour.

We must as creatives seek out the things that confuse us, irritate us, and challenge our worldview. Creativity dies in comfort, in case you do not know this. It lives in the friction between the known and the unknown. By stepping out of the algorithmic loop, we would then expose our minds to the wild ideas that have not yet been sanitized for our consumption.

The "Crucifixion of Poises" is the great but quiet tragedy of our age and time. We are now wealthier in information but sadly poorer in wisdom; we have become faster in production but painfully slower in revelation. We have confused



*If creativity is discovered not to have died yet, its resuscitation would immediately requires a radical act of rebellion. It would requires of us to descend from the cross of productivity and reclaim our right to stillness from the standpoint of onlookers waiting for the death of creativity.*

the noise of activity for the voice of creativity. The confusion is real. Yet we fail to realize that creativity is not a resource that can be mined until it is gone. We refuse to learn that it is a spring that flows only when the ground is still. And to save it, we must stop this frantic movement. We must put down the tools of engagement and optimization and simply stand still. Trust me, it is in that stillness, in that hard-won poise, that the death of creativity would be reversed. The muse does not return to the loud and the busy, but to those who have the courage to be quiet, the patience to be bored, and the strength to remain poised in the face of a chaotic world. The death of creativity, however, is not inevitable and this we must painfully accept. It is a sad choice we have to make every time we choose distraction over depth. Know this and have peace; It is time to choose depth.

# INTERVIEW

## “Governance is for impact, not titles,” Okojie reflects on grassroots development in Edo

CAROLINE AMEH

**H**on. Prince Henry Odianosen Okojie, who represents Esan North East/Esan South East Federal Constituency of Edo State in the 10th National Assembly, has described governance as a practical tool for community transformation, insisting that public office must translate into visible impact on the lives of the people.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with The Nigerian Observer, the lawmaker reflected on his political journey, constituency projects, and collaboration with the administration of Monday Okpebholo, which he commended for what he described as development-driven leadership.

### “POLITICS IS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT, NOT POSITION”

Okojie said that from the beginning of his mandate, he viewed governance as a responsibility to deliver tangible change, rather than merely occupy political office.

“Politics or governance is a tool to develop your community,” he said. “From day one, it has been project upon project.”

One of his major interventions, he disclosed, is the “Operation Light Up Agbazilo” initiative, a solar-powered streetlight programme aimed at illuminating communities, schools and public spaces across the constituency.

“Today, people call me Mr. Light because of that initiative,” he said, noting that the project has helped improve security and boost economic activities in several communities.

### EDUCATION SUPPORT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The lawmaker also highlighted interventions in education, particularly efforts to ease the financial burden on students seeking to sit for WAEC and JAMB examinations within the constituency.

According to him, registration costs that previously posed challenges for many parents are now being addressed through support programmes.

On youth empowerment, Okojie said his office has implemented initiatives designed to en-



HON. PRINCE HENRY ODIANOSEN OKOJIE

gage young people in productive ventures and skills acquisition.

“We have empowered thousands of youths with starter packs,” he said. “Some received N200,000, others N500,000, N1 million, and even up to N2 million depending on their needs and skills.”

He explained that beneficiaries were trained or supported in vocational areas such as tailoring, shoemaking and soap production, alongside the distribution of equipment including sewing machines, motorcycles and tricycles.

### SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AND FARMERS

Okojie further disclosed that more than 3,000 women traders have benefited from N50,000 business grants after findings showed that many operated micro-businesses with less than N5,000 in working capital.

“We realised many of our market women survive on very small capital. We had to step in and support them to grow,” he said.

In the agricultural sector, he added, farmers have received fertilisers, spraying equipment and other inputs aimed at improving productivity and strengthening food security.

### ROADS, WATER PROJECTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Among the infrastructure projects he highlighted was the rehabilitation of the long-abandoned Uromi New Hospital Road, which he described as a personal legacy project.

“The road had been impassable for over 45 years. Today, it is motorable and has changed the story of that area,” he said.

He also listed boreholes, school buildings and community water projects among ongoing interventions across the constituency.

### COLLABORATION WITH EDO STATE GOVERNMENT

Commending the state government, Okojie praised Governor Okpebholo for what he described as visible development efforts across Edo State.

“Edo has become a construction site. The governor is committed to using state resources for the people,” he said.

### LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTIONS

At the National Assembly, Okojie said he has sponsored motions addressing critical social issues, including the refusal of hospitals to treat gunshot victims without police reports — a situation he said once led to the death of a friend before intervention was made.

“Today, no hospital demands a police report before treating gunshot victims because of that motion,” he stated.

He also cited interventions that contributed to the restoration of electricity in several communities that had reportedly been without power supply for more than a decade.

Reflecting on his stewardship, the lawmaker said many constituents now refer to him as “Mr. Project” because of the range of initiatives undertaken in the constituency.

“When you do things that truly impact lives, people will see it,” he said. “That is what governance should be about.”

He urged public office holders to prioritise service delivery, stressing that political office remains a trust that must be used to improve the welfare of the people.

“When people entrust you with a mandate, you must give back,” he said. “That is the essence of representation.”

## Climate and Energy: Nigeria’s tightrope between growth and net zero

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

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

### THE ENERGY ACCESS GAP

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

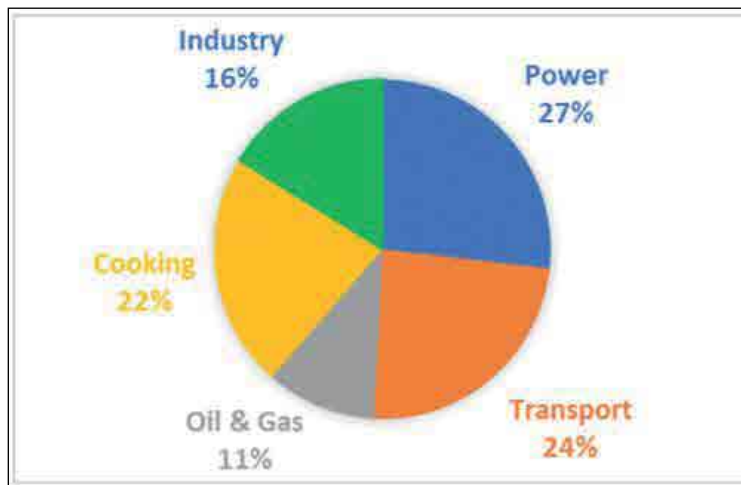
This energy deficit stifles productivity. Small businesses can’t scale.

Hospitals struggle with power outages. Students study by kerosene lamps. The irony is that Nigeria flares over 300 million cubic feet of natural gas daily, enough to power much of the country if captured and used.

### CLIMATE COMMITMENTS VS. ECONOMIC REALITY

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

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



### GLOBAL CONTEXT AND LEVERAGE

Nigeria’s situation mirrors that of many developing countries: expected to cut emissions while lifting millions out of energy poverty. The global debate is shifting from “stop oil” to “stop

unabated emissions.” For Nigeria, this opens space to argue for gas as a transition fuel and to demand climate finance that matches the scale of the challenge.

The Loss and Damage Fund agreed at COP28 could be a vehi-

cle, but disbursement mechanisms remain unclear. Carbon markets offer another avenue, but Nigeria needs credible data and governance to participate.

### WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

Three shifts are urgent. First, fix the power sector’s commercial viability by improving tariff collection and reducing losses. Second, scale decentralized renewables for rural areas where grid extension is uneconomical. Third, capture and monetize flared gas for domestic use and export.

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

## Foreign

## NEWS

**HANTAVIRUS:**

US passengers from the MV Hondius cruise ship are instructed by authorities after disembarking the vessel in Tenerife, Spain.

## US and French nationals test positive for hantavirus after leaving ship

An American and a French national who have returned to their home countries having left a cruise ship hit by a deadly outbreak of hantavirus have tested positive, authorities say.

In total seven cases of hantavirus linked to the MV Hondius have been confirmed, with two other cases suspected, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday.

The US health department said a second American national on the repatriation flight had also shown mild symptoms, adding that both passengers had travelled back in "biocontainment units out of an abundance of caution".

French Health Minister Stéphanie Rist said a woman was isolating in Paris and her health was deteriorating, with 22 contacts traced.

Three passengers have died after travelling on the ship, two of whom were confirmed to have had the virus.

The WHO said the person who is believed to have been the first to be infected in the outbreak died before he could be tested.

Two other British nationals with confirmed cases are currently being treated in the Netherlands and South Africa.

Hantaviruses are usually carried by rodents, but hu-

man transmission of the Andes strain - which the World Health Organization (WHO) believes was contracted by some of the Dutch ship's passengers while in South America - is possible.

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

Officials say the risk of a major outbreak is very low.

More than 90 passengers of the MV Hondius ship, currently docked in Spain's Canary Islands, are being repatriated.

In its latest update from Tenerife on Monday, Spanish officials said 54 passengers and crew were still on board the ship. Spanish Health Minister Mónica García said six of those were passengers: four Australians, one Briton and one New Zealander.

Some 22 people would disembark the ship to fly to the Netherlands on Monday, she said - including the Australians who had been expected to be flown home directly but whose plane could not be guaranteed to arrive on time.

The MV Hondius was then expected to leave for the Netherlands later on Monday, she said.

Four Canadian passengers, meanwhile, have landed in Victoria, British Columbia, on Sunday evening after taking a chartered flight from Tenerife to Bagotville, Quebec. Authori-

ties said they would be self-isolating and monitored for at least three weeks.

In its statement early on Monday, the US Department of Health and Human Services said all 17 US citizens on Sunday's flight would undergo "clinical assessment" at a medical facility in Nebraska. A British national living in the US was also repatriated alongside them.

Seven other US passengers had already returned home and were being monitored in their home states.

Before the American case was confirmed, WHO head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that the decision by the US not to follow his organisation's guidelines over the hantavirus outbreak "may have risks". The WHO has recommended 42 days of isolation for those leaving the MV Hondius.

But Dr Jay Bhattacharya, the acting head of the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said he did not want to cause public panic, insisting that human-to-human transmission was rare and it should not be treated like the Covid virus.

Cruise ship passengers were pictured wearing blue gowns, bouffant caps, and medical face masks as they disembarked on Sunday at the port of Grandilla de Abona in Tenerife.

On Sunday, a plane carrying

20 British nationals arrived in the UK.

The passengers flew into Manchester Airport on a chartered flight from Tenerife and were taken to Arrowe Park Hospital in Wirral, Merseyside, to isolate for 72 hours. None of them have reported symptoms.

In Spain, 14 Spaniards flown to Madrid now face mandatory quarantine at a military hospital. Another two evacuation flights are scheduled for Monday afternoon.

A separate flight with 26 passengers and crew - including eight Dutch nationals - arrived in the Netherlands on Sunday.

Earlier on Monday, Ukraine said four of its citizens would remain on board the MV Hondius as part of the crew to ensure the ship's transfer to the Netherlands. Upon arrival, the foreign ministry said, they would be expected to quarantine at a medical facility.

Another Ukrainian national was expected to leave the ship as part of the partial crew evacuation on a flight to the Netherlands.

At present, no signs of illness have been recorded among the Ukrainians, the ministry added.

In a video message released on Monday by Oceanwide Expeditions, which operates the MV Hondius, the captain said the crew's thoughts were "with the ones that are now longer with us".

## Washington dinner shooting suspect pleads not guilty

A man charged with attacking the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington DC last month has pleaded not guilty.

Cole Tomas Allen, 31, was charged with federal gun crimes and attempting to assassinate US President Donald Trump.

The gun charges include using a firearm during a crime of violence and interstate transportation of a firearm with intent to commit a felony.

Allen appeared in court on Monday in an orange jumpsuit and was shackled at the wrists and feet, according to CBS News, the BBC's US partner.

Prosecutors allege that Al-

len attempted to storm past a security checkpoint and fired a shot at a US Secret Service agent at the event at a Washington Hilton hotel. The federal agent was hit in an exchange of gunfire but was saved by his bullet-proof vest.

Agents tackled Allen just short of a staircase that leads down to a ballroom where the annual White House Correspondents' dinner - attended by journalists, Trump, and many top US officials - was getting under way.

Allen's appearance in court was his first time standing before US District Judge Trevor McFadden, who will preside over the remainder of the case.

## Trump calls Iran response to US proposal to end war 'totally unacceptable'

President Donald Trump has dismissed Iran's response to US proposals to end the war as "totally unacceptable".

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency said Tehran's proposal, sent via Pakistan, which has served as a mediator, included an immediate end to the war on all fronts, a halt to the US naval blockade of Iranian ports and guarantees of no further attacks on Iran.

A ceasefire meant to facilitate talks to end the war launched by the US and Israel in February has been largely observed, despite occasional exchanges of fire.

Earlier this week, Trump repeated that the war in Iran will be "over quickly".

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium must be "taken out" before the war against Iran can be considered over.

"There's still enrichment sites that have to be dismantled," Netanyahu said in an interview on CBS's 60 Minutes show.

According to Iranian state media, Tehran's proposal includes a demand for compensation for war damage and an emphasis on Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

On Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian did not directly reference Tehran's proposal but said: "We will never bow our heads before the enemy, and if talk of dialogue or negotiation arises, it does not mean surrender or retreat." Trump posted on Truth Social: "I have just read the response from Iran's so-called 'Representatives.' I don't like it - TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE."

US news outlet Axios reported that the one-page, 14-point US memorandum includes provisions such as a suspension on Iranian nuclear enrichment, the lifting of sanc-

tions, and restoring free transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

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

Iran has continued to block the strategic strait, prompting a rise in world oil prices. Normally about 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the strait.

The US, for its part, has been enforcing a blockade of Iranian ports to exert pressure on Tehran to agree to its terms - a move that has infuriated Iran.

Israeli and US forces began massive air strikes on Iran on 28 February. A ceasefire in the Iran war came into effect last month.

In his CBS interview, Netanyahu also said he wanted to "draw down to zero" American financial support for Israel's military.

"We receive \$3.8 billion a year. And I think that it's time that we weaned ourselves from the remaining military support," he said, adding: "Let's start now and do it over the next decade."

Iran has warned its neighbours about complying with US sanctions.

Military spokesman Mohammad Akraminia said vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz would face "severe consequences" if they did not co-operate with Tehran first, Irna news agency reported.

Akraminia said Americans "will never be able to turn this vast expanse in the northern Indian Ocean into a real blockade by covering it with their fleet".

The US has a significant military presence across the Gulf, with bases in Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman.

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down to a ballroom where the annual White House Correspondents' dinner - attended by journalists, Trump, and many top US officials - was getting under way.

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**NEWS****Foreign****France's Macron announces more than €1 billion of investment deals in Kenya**

French President Emmanuel Macron urged more investment in Africa on Sunday, as he prepared to co-host the Africa-Forward summit with his Kenyan counterpart.

The first such forum to be held in an English-speaking country, it marks a shift in French policy towards the continent.

Paris has stressed its new outlook as a "partnership of equals," with the focus on economic cooperation and investment.

Macron used the occasion to announce major news deals between the two nations:

"French companies are investing in and believe in Kenya's potential, CMA-CGM, which has just committed to renovating two terminals at the port of Mombasa, a total investment of €700 million; Meridiam, which is set to expand the country's second wind farm to the tune of \$225 million; Ki-

betu; and in total, across all the projects, as we have seen, as I was saying, more than €1 billion has been committed."

In all, Macron and Kenya's President Ruto signed 11 agreements on Sunday, including investments in modernised transport, sustainable agriculture and a nuclear energy plant.

"We understand as African leaders that we too have responsibilities," Ruto said.

"This relationship is not going to be one-sided. We will be expecting from France as they will be expecting from us and they will be giving as much as we are giving. That is the win-win, you know, mutually beneficial relationship."

Ruto said both leaders expect the summit to be a "turning point" toward a better partnership. But he added that Nairobi is looking to nurture a wide range of relationships, "neither looking East nor West" but "looking forward."

**Philippine VP Sara Duterte impeached for a second time**

The Philippine House of Representatives has voted to impeach Vice-President Sara Duterte for a second time, threatening her plan to run for president in 2028.

Monday's vote moves the impeachment process to the Senate for trial, where if convicted, the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte will be disqualified from holding public office.

The 47-year-old is leading early surveys to replace her ally-turned-bitter foe, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The case against the vice-president stemmed from her alleged misuse of public funds and public threats against Marcos, his wife and his cousin, the former House speaker.

Duterte was impeached on the same grounds in 2025, but the Supreme Court blocked it on a technicality before the Senate trial could start.

The case was revived this year. Last week, a House committee that looked into the evidence against the vice-president ruled that there was sufficient grounds to impeach her.

Duterte described the case as "nothing more than a scrap of paper" in a formal written response. She refused to appear in the committee hearings which she said had been politically motivated.

After the impeachment vote on Monday, Duterte's defence counsel said in a statement that "the burden now rests on the accusers to substantiate their claims" according to the law.

What comes next?

Monday night's impeachment vote served as a barom-

eter of Marcos' support in the House. 257 of the 290 lawmakers in attendance voted to impeach Duterte, more than the one-thirds required to advance the case to trial.

But unlike in the House, a conviction in the Senate is uncertain, if a trial does start and runs its course.

In Philippine politics that is dominated by patronage and dynastic alliances, House members, who are elected per legislative district are friendlier to the incumbent president, compared to senators.

The country's 24 senators are elected on the national level and the Senate is a traditional springboard for those hoping to run for president or vice-president in the future.

In the 2025 mid-term vote, where half of the Senate was elected, candidates allied with Duterte fared better than those who ran under Marcos' coalition.

But the outcome of an impeachment vote will be difficult to predict under the country's multi-party system with shifting alliances.

Duterte announced her intention to run for president in February, much earlier than expected. Marcos is limited by the constitution to a single six-year term.

She holds a 17-point lead over her nearest rival based on a survey in March by Manila pollster WR Numero.

In the 2022 elections, Duterte was the survey front-runner to succeed her father, but she formed an alliance with Marcos and ran for vice-president instead to consolidate their support bases and fend off a reformist wave. The pair won by a landslide.

**Bosnia's powerful peace envoy quits, with questions over role's future**

The most powerful figure in Bosnia and Herzegovina has confirmed that he is stepping down.

Christian Schmidt has served as international high representative since 2021, the second-longest tenure of any high representative. His time in the post was filled with conflict and controversy.

His office said that Schmidt "has taken the personal decision to conclude his service to the implementation of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

His appointment was never approved by Russia and now it seems he has also lost the support of the US, making his position untenable. A broader conundrum is whether the Office of the High Representative itself has a future and, if not, where that would leave Bosnia.

The role dates back to the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement which ended the country's ru-

inous ethnic conflict.

The UN-appointed high representative is supposed to ensure that the agreement is followed and has wide-ranging powers to keep the country's ever-fractious ethno-political leaders in line.

During his stint as high representative, Paddy Ashdown memorably wielded these so-called "Bonn Powers" sacking 60 Bosnian-Serb officials in one day in 2004 for refusing to cooperate with the Hague Tribunal.

Ashdown duly received the not entirely flattering nickname of "Viceroy of Bosnia".

Subsequent holders of the office were far more low key. Bosnia and Herzegovina's international supporters focused on the country's leaders dealing with their affairs on their own.

The failure of that approach was reflected by Schmidt's

more activist role following his appointment.

Anadolu via Getty Images Citizens stage a protest against the decisions of High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Christian Schmidt in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 28, 2023. Schmidt announced on the night of the general elections on Oct. 2, he had enacted a controversial electoral law reform, using the "Bonn powers." Anadolu via Getty Images

Protests in Sarajevo in 2023 against Christian Schmidt about a electoral law reform

He repeatedly used the Bonn Powers to block separatist legislation promoted by the Bosnian-Serb leader, Milorad Dodik, who ignored these blocks. This struggle led to Dodik receiving a one-year prison sentence and six-year ban on holding public office.

But it appears that Dodik

will be the long-term winner. His expensive deployment of Washington lobbyists paid off when the US lifted its long-term sanctions on him.

Cynics have noted Dodik's subsequent support for the award of a major gas pipeline project to a hitherto obscure US company with links to the Trump family. In contrast, Schmidt's reservations about the project appear to have cost him Washington's support.

The next move could be vital to Bosnia's future.

Schmidt says he will remain in office until a successor is selected. But Russia has repeatedly backed up Dodik's calls for closure of the Office of the High Representative.

If the US takes a similar stance, Bosnia could lose the only figure who can act as a safeguard against the separatist ambitions of ethno-nationalist leaders.

**MEETING:**

France's President Emmanuel Macron, left, and Kenya's President William Ruto greet each other at State House in Nairobi, Kenya, 10 May 2026.

**Dozens of Nigerian fishermen feared dead after Chad air strikes on Boko Haram**

Dozens of Nigerian fishermen are feared dead after Chad's military launched air strikes on Boko Haram militants in the Lake Chad region, a local fishermen's leader has told the BBC.

Abubakar Gamandi Usman, chairman of Lake Chad Basin Fisheries Association of Nigeria, said several of the union's members were missing and estimated more than 40 had died.

No bodies have yet been recovered but Usman believes some fishermen were hit by the strikes, while others drowned after attempting to flee in overloaded boats.

Authorities in Chad and Nigeria have not commented, but

on Sunday Chad's presidency said it had carried out retaliatory "intensive air strikes" on Boko Haram strongholds.

In a statement on Facebook, the presidency said it had responded to "unjustified attacks" by Boko Haram, which took place last Monday and Wednesday and targeted Chadian military bases near Lake Chad, reportedly killing at least 24 soldiers and two generals.

The Lake Chad basin is a huge region of waterways and swampland shared by Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. It has long been a stronghold for Boko Haram and its rival faction, Islamic State West Africa Province (Is wap).

"After Boko Haram attacked Chadian forces, they retreated to islands they operate from. Fishermen also inhabit these islands," Usman told the BBC.

After Chad's air force began circling overhead on Friday, panic broke out, with both Boko Haram fighters and fishermen attempting to flee.

The search for the missing fishermen has been slow, Usman said, as some parts of Lake Chad are very deep. The local community also has limited access to canoes, as many are controlled by Boko Haram, Usman added.

"Boko Haram controls access to the fishing grounds, transporting fishermen to and

from the fish market to the fishing site. Boko Haram collects taxes from these fishermen," he said.

Recently, the region has seen a rise in attacks on security forces, as well as kidnappings and raids on communities.

Chadian military operations have been accused of causing civilian deaths before - in October 2024, the air force was said to have killed dozens of Nigerian fishermen during air strikes targeting Boko Haram fighters on Tilma Island in Lake Chad.

Nigeria's authorities have not publicly commented on allegations that fishermen have been caught up in the recent strikes.

# Feature

## FUNDING AFRICA'S TOMORROW

# The race for SDGs and Agenda 2063

LUCY OGALUE (NAN)

From the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the African Union's Agenda 2063, the continent has mapped out an ambitious pathway for inclusive growth, industrialization and climate resilience.

Nonetheless, stakeholders say what remains uncertain is how to fund the plan.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, represent a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030.

Comprising 17 goals, they provide a comprehensive framework addressing critical areas such as health, education, clean energy, climate action and inclusive economic growth.

Complementing this global framework is African Union Agenda 2063, Africa's long-term development blueprint adopted in 2013.

The agenda outlines the continent's vision for inclusive growth and sustainable development over a 50-year period, anchored on aspirations such as economic prosperity, regional integration, good governance, peace and security.

Both frameworks are closely aligned and mutually reinforcing. While the SDGs provide a global roadmap, Agenda 2063 reflects Africa's specific priorities and development context.

As a result, African countries are encouraged to integrate the two into national development plans to drive coherent and coordinated implementation.

In spite of this alignment, progress towards achieving both agendas remains uneven across the continent, with financing gaps, climate shocks and structural constraints continuing to slow implementation and limit impact.

These issues dominated discussions at the twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-12), where policymakers, economists and development partners converged to assess Africa's progress.

Across sessions at the ARFSD-12 forum, one message stood out: Africa's problem is no longer vision, but delivery. And delivery is constrained by financing.

Mr Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at the forum, reiterated the importance of protecting climate and development investments on the continent.

According to him, unlocking capital will depend largely on reducing risks that discourage investment.

"We must protect climate and development investments even under fiscal pressure.

"Reducing currency risk, climate risk and policy risk is central to mobilising both domestic and private capital."

He emphasised that Africa must reposition its financing strategy to match the scale of its ambitions.

"Africa's challenge is not ambition,



**AGENDA 2063 GOALS**

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but delivery," he added, stressing the need to move from commitments to measurable results.

The ECA executive secretary underscored the need for a shift in approach saying, we cannot continue with fragmented, project-based delivery when the scale of the challenge demands coordinated and structured investment.

For many African countries, the cost of borrowing remains significantly higher than in other regions, limiting their ability to invest in infrastructure, energy and social services.

Experts at the forum linked this challenge to structural issues in the global financial system, including credit rating methodologies and risk assessments that often disadvantage developing economies.

### ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER AND COP32

President-designate, Gedion Timothewos, warned that rising debt and declining investment flows were already eroding development gains.

While pointing to financing gaps and high capital costs as key constraints, Timothewos said Africa's experience underscored persistent structural barriers.

According to the forum, climate finance adds another layer to the challenge.

While Africa contributes minimally to global emissions, it remains one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. Yet, funding for adaptation and resilience continues to lag behind.

Participants noted that most cli-

mate finance was directed towards mitigation, leaving critical areas such as disaster risk reduction and loss-and-damage support underfunded.

To bridge the gap, stakeholders reiterated the importance to increasingly turn to innovative financing mechanisms.

They identified blended finance, green bonds and debt-for-climate swaps as tools that could help mobilise private capital at scale.

However, experts cautioned that finance alone was not enough as many African countries still lacked pipelines of bankable projects and well-structured investment opportunities that met investor expectations.

This gap, they said, reflected limited technical capacity in project preparation, risk structuring and

public-private partnerships.

Gatete emphasised the importance of strengthening these pipelines.

"It is not enough to have strategies; we must develop credible, investment-ready projects that can attract financing," he said.

Meanwhile, some countries are beginning to address these issues.

Rwanda, for instance, has shifted from fragmented projects to coordinated investment platforms aligned with national priorities, helping to attract more structured financing.

Beyond external financing, the forum also highlighted weaknesses in domestic systems.

More so, stakeholders say low tax revenues, inefficiencies in public financial management and limited capacity to track spending has continued to constrain governments' ability to fund development.

Dr Mthuli Ncube, Zimbabwe's Finance Minister, emphasised the need to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation while safeguarding long-term investments.

He said balancing debt obligations with development spending would be critical in the years ahead.

Another recurring theme was the need for stronger coordination, both within countries and across the continent.

Participants pointed to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as a platform that could link climate finance with industrialisation and regional value chains.

They argued that fragmented, project-based approaches must give way to integrated, large-scale programmes.

Gatete reinforced this position, stressing that Africa must act collectively to maximise impact.

"Coordinated action at scale is what will enable Africa to translate its ambitions into tangible outcomes," he said.

Civil society groups also called for greater transparency and accountability, stressing that financing must translate into tangible benefits for citizens.

They urged governments and partners to ensure that resources were used efficiently and equitably.

In spite of the immense challenges, a sense of cautious optimism prevailed, with speakers agreeing that Africa possesses the necessary policy frameworks, institutional structures, and experience to achieve its goals.

The said what was required now, is alignment between national priorities and global financing systems, between public and private capital, and between ambition and implementation.

As Africa moves closer to the 2030 deadline, the stakes are rising; without significant changes in how development is financed, the continent risks falling short of its goals.

Experts say that with the right mix of reforms, innovation and partnerships, Africa can still turn ambition into reality.

They say the crucial, unresolved issue facing Africa's growth is navigating its complex financial landscape. (NAN Feature)

# Nigeria's education crisis: 18 million out-of-school children and counting

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world. UNICEF estimates 18.3 million children aged 6-18 are not in school as of 2024. The figure is not static. Conflict, poverty, and cultural barriers push thousands more out every year.

The crisis is most severe in the north. In states like Kebbi, Zamfara, and Yobe, over 60% of girls are out of school. Insecurity has closed over 1,500 schools since 2019. Even where schools are open, learning outcomes are poor. The 2023 National Assessment found that only 23% of Primary 4 pupils could read a simple sentence in English.

## \*THE ROOT CAUSES\*

Poverty is the main driver. For many families, the immediate cost of uniforms, books, and transport outweighs the long-term benefit of education. Child labor and early marriage compound the problem, especially for girls.

Supply-side issues matter too. Nigeria needs 277,000 more classrooms and 1.4 million more teachers to meet demand. Many existing schools lack water, toilets, and electricity. Teacher absenteeism averages 25% in rural areas.

The Almajiri system adds another layer. Millions of children attend informal Quranic schools without formal curriculum or basic literacy. Attempts to integrate Almajiri schools into the formal system have faced resistance from communities and funding gaps.

## \*POLICY EFFORTS AND GAPS\*

The Universal Basic Education Act mandates free and compulsory education for children aged 6-15. The Universal Basic Education Commission disburses funds to states, but uptake



OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

is low. Many states fail to provide the 50% counterpart funding required to access federal money.

The National Policy on Education emphasizes mother-tongue instruction in early years and technical education. Implementation is patchy. EdTech initiatives expanded during COVID-19, but less than 15% of rural students had access to devices or data.

## \*WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE\*

Experts agree that incremental fixes won't close the gap. Three shifts are needed:

1. **\*Targeted cash transfers\***: Conditional cash transfers tied to school attendance have worked in Brazil and Pakistan. Nigeria's pilot programs show promise but need scale.

2. **\*Community ownership\***: School-based management committees with real authority improve enrollment and accountability.

3. **\*Teacher reform\***: Recruit, train, and retain teachers through better pay, housing, and career progression. Without teachers, infrastructure is empty.

Globally, education is the highest-return investment a country can make.

Every additional year of schooling increases earnings by 8-10%. For Nigeria, the cost of inaction is a generation locked out of the digital economy.

The question is political will. Education spending remains below 7% of the federal budget, far below the UNESCO recommendation of 15-20%. Until that changes, the out-of-school crisis will persist.

# Local Government autonomy: Nigeria's unfinished governance reform

UDO BASSEY

For over two decades, Nigeria has debated local government autonomy. The constitution lists 774 local governments as the third tier of government, but in practice, most operate as extensions of state governments. The result is weak service delivery where it matters most: primary healthcare, primary education, rural roads, and sanitation.

The push for financial and administrative autonomy gained momentum after the Supreme Court's July 2024 ruling. The court declared that state governments could no longer withhold or divert funds meant for local governments. It ordered direct payment of allocations from the Federation Account to LGAs with democratically elected councils.

## \*WHY AUTONOMY MATTERS\*

Local governments are closest to the people. They are constitutionally mandated to handle primary education, health, roads, and markets. But when state governors control LG funds, projects become political tools. Audits



NIGERIA GOVERNORS

by BudGIT and CISLAC consistently show that over 60% of LGAs cannot account for monthly allocations.

Without autonomy, rural areas suffer. A clinic may exist on paper, but have no drugs, staff, or electricity. Primary schools lack teachers because LGAs can't pay salaries. Youth unemployment worsens as local economies

stagnate.

## \*THE RESISTANCE AND RISKS\*

State governors argue that full autonomy will fragment development planning and create 774 uncoordinated entities. Some also warn of fiscal indiscipline at the LGA level, citing poor record-keeping and weak oversight.

There are valid concerns. Many LGAs lack qualified staff, internal audit systems, and procurement capacity. Direct funding without accountability could worsen leakage. The risk is that autonomy becomes a transfer of corruption from state to local level.

## \*MAKING IT WORK\*

Autonomy alone won't fix governance. It needs three supporting pillars:

1. **\*Capacity building\***: Train LGA staff in budgeting, procurement, and project management. The Federal Ministry of Finance and the World Bank's SFTAS program have started this, but scale is slow.

2. **\*Transparency\***: Publish LGA budgets and expenditures monthly on open platforms. Citizens can monitor projects if they have data.

3. **\*Electoral integrity\***: Ensure LGA elections are free and fair. When council chairmen are appointed rather than elected, accountability to citizens disappears.

Globally, countries like India and Kenya have shown that devolution works when paired with fiscal responsibility laws and public participation. Nigeria's next test is whether the Supreme Court ruling translates into better roads in Bida, cleaner markets in Aba, and functioning clinics in Biu.

If it does, local government autonomy could be the most significant governance reform since 1999. If it doesn't, it will be another paper victory.

**FEATURE**

# Nigeria's health system: Too many out-of-pocket payments, too little coverage

CLARETH SOLOMON

Nigeria's health system is under strain. Life expectancy is 54 years, maternal mortality is 512 per 100,000 live births, and out-of-pocket spending accounts for 70% of total health expenditure. For most Nigerians, getting sick means choosing between debt and no treatment.

The National Health Insurance Authority Act of 2022 made health insurance mandatory. The goal was universal health coverage by 2030. But coverage remains low. Only 7% of Nigerians are enrolled in any form of health insurance, according to the NHIA. The informal sector, which employs 80% of workers, is largely excluded.

**\*WHY COVERAGE IS LOW\***

Affordability is the main barrier. The basic health insurance package costs N12,000 annually per person. For a family of five earning minimum wage, that's unaffordable. Trust is another issue. Many enrollees complain of poor service, drug stockouts, and long wait times at accredited facilities.

Supply is also limited. Nigeria has 0.4 doctors per 1,000 people, below the WHO recommendation of 1 per 1,000. Primary health centers exist in most wards, but 30% have no skilled birth attendant, and 40% lack basic drugs.

**\*THE BURDEN OF OUT-OF-POCKET SPENDING\***

When insurance is absent, people



NIGERIA HEALTHCARE WORKER

pay cash at the point of care. A single hospital admission for malaria or delivery can cost N50,000-N200,000. For households living on N100,000 monthly, one illness can erase savings and push families into poverty.

Catastrophic health spending affects 12% of Nigerians annually. It's a key driver of the 133 million people classified as multidimensionally poor.

**\*LESSONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES\***

Rwanda achieved 90% health insurance coverage by subsidizing

premiums for the poor and using community-based schemes. Ghana's NHIS covers 60% of the population through a mix of payroll deductions and tax funding. Both countries invested heavily in primary care.

Nigeria's Basic Health Care Provision Fund allocates 1% of consolidated revenue to primary healthcare. Since 2019, it has disbursed over N120 billion. Impact is visible in some states, but disbursement delays and weak monitoring limit results.

**\*THE PATH TO UNIVERSAL****COVERAGE\***

Three priorities stand out:

1. *\*Expand coverage for the informal sector\**: Mobile money and agency banking can collect micro-premiums of N500-N1,000 monthly.

2. *\*Strengthen primary healthcare\**: No insurance scheme works if facilities lack drugs and staff. The PHC revitalization program must accelerate.

3. *\*Improve data and accountability\**: A unified health information system can track enrollment, claims, and outcomes in real time.

Globally, countries that achieved

”  
*Supply is also limited. Nigeria has 0.4 doctors per 1,000 people, below the WHO recommendation of 1 per 1,000. Primary health centers exist in most wards, but 30% have no skilled birth attendant, and 40% lack basic drugs.*

universal coverage did it over 15-20 years with sustained political commitment. Nigeria's window is open, but the clock is ticking. Without faster progress, out-of-pocket payments will keep driving poverty and preventable deaths.

## Insecurity in the Sahel: How Nigeria's North is linked to a regional crisis

MUHAMMED IBN ALHASSAN

Insecurity in northern Nigeria cannot be understood in isolation. The kidnappings in Zamfara, banditry in Kaduna, and insurgency in Borno are part of a wider Sahel crisis stretching from Mali to Lake Chad. The region is now the epicenter of global terrorism, accounting for over 50% of terrorism deaths worldwide in 2024, according to the Global Terrorism Index.

The Sahel's problems are rooted in geography and governance. Vast, sparsely populated borders are hard to police. Climate stress has reduced arable land, pushing herders and farmers into conflict. Weak state presence leaves a vacuum that armed groups fill with a mix of ideology, criminality, and local grievances.

**THE SPILLOVER EFFECT**

For Nigeria, the spillover is direct. Boko Haram and ISWAP operate across the Lake Chad Basin, exploiting porous borders. Bandit groups in the northwest often source weapons and fighters from across the Niger and Mali borders. The same networks that move cattle also move arms and drugs.

This regional dimension compli-

cates military solutions. A raid in Katsina can displace fighters into Niger. A clampdown in Mali pushes militants toward Burkina Faso and Nigeria. As one security analyst put it, "You can't fence the Sahel!"

**THE GOVERNANCE GAP**

Military operations alone have not reversed the trend. Communities often distrust security forces due to past abuses, and local governments lack the capacity to deliver basic services. When schools are closed, markets disrupted, and clinics abandoned, recruitment for armed groups becomes easier.

The Multinational Joint Task Force, involving Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, has had tactical successes but struggles with funding and coordination. Political instability in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger since 2020 has further weakened regional cooperation.

**A PATH FORWARD**

Experts argue for a "3D" approach: Defense, Diplomacy, and Development. Defense remains necessary to degrade armed groups, but it must be paired with community engagement to separate civilians from fighters. Diplomacy is needed to rebuild trust

between Sahel states after recent military coups. Development must target the drivers of recruitment: youth unemployment, climate adaptation, and local justice systems.

Globally, the Sahel is a test case for whether the international community can address terrorism without creating dependency. The U.S. and France have drawn down troops, while Rus-

sia's Wagner Group has expanded influence. For Nigeria, the stakes are clear: if the Sahel destabilizes further, northern Nigeria cannot remain stable for long.



VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE SAHEL SAHEL202

# West Africa's malaria menace: A call to action



WEST AFRICA 2026 WORLD MALARIA DAY

ABUJAH RACHEAL (NAN)

**M**alaria elimination in West Africa is no longer hindered by a lack of solutions, but by execution.

Validated strategies and tools exist; the focus, stakeholders say, must now be on immediate, widespread deployment.

At the 27th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Health Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held in Freetown, the malaria question took centre stage.

Behind the formal speeches, technical presentations, and policy frameworks, one message echoed: West Africa does not lack plans; it struggles to consistently implement them.

Tales from the grassroots expose the menace of malaria and the urgency of evolving from promises to action.

In a small, dust-swept village in Kebbi State, 27-year-old Malama Maimuna Salisu watches her two-year-old son, Shehu, shiver under a thin blanket, his body burning with malaria fever.

In spite of repeated campaigns and the distribution of insecticide-treated nets, the realities of daily life often get in the way.

The heat makes the nets uncomfortable; the nearest primary healthcare centre is far; transport costs eat into the family's modest farming income.

For Salisu, malaria is not just a disease, it is a cycle.

Her son is one of the nearly 110 million clinically diagnosed malaria cases recorded annually in Nigeria.

Records indicate that Nigeria carries the heaviest malaria burden globally, accounting for about a quarter of all cases and nearly a third of deaths worldwide.

In West Africa alone, Nigeria represents more than half of reported cases.

Malaria is responsible for more than 36 per cent of under-five mortality in Nigeria, with more than 300,000 deaths recorded each year.

For families like Salisu's, repeated infections drain household income, reduce productivity, and deepen poverty.

At a nearby primary healthcare centre, community health worker Mrs Ruth Bala sees the consequences every day.

"We know the preventive methods, but behavioural change is slow, and resources are limited.

"We see too many children like Shehu when it could have been prevented," Bala said.

Her experience reflects a broader reality across rural communities, where awareness exists, but access, affordability, and social factors continue to undermine progress.

With nearly 97 per cent of Nigerians at risk and a child dying every five minutes from malaria, the scale of the challenge remains staggering.

It is against this backdrop that regional leaders gathered in Freetown recently.

Speaking on behalf of the President of Sierra Leone at the Opening session, the Chief Minister, Dr David Sengh, called for a shift from commitments to measurable results, highlighting malaria and maternal mortality as urgent priorities.

For the Sierra Leone's Minister of



*In West Africa alone, Nigeria represents more than half of reported cases. Malaria is responsible for more than 36 per cent of under-five mortality in Nigeria, with more than 300,000 deaths recorded each year.*

Health, Dr Austin Demby, the message was clear: "We have all we need to eradicate malaria; there is no reason why we should not; the time to end it is now."

At the centre of discussions was a renewed push for coordinated regional action.

The West African Health Organisation (WAHO), led by Dr Melchior Aissi, Director-General of WAHO, emphasised that malaria could not be tackled in isolation.

The Regional Malaria Elimination Framework, presented by Dr Virgil Lokossou, Director of Healthcare Services at the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), sets ambitious targets, including a 90 per cent reduction in malaria incidence and elimination in at least three countries by 2035.

Complementing this is the Freetown Charter, introduced by Sattie Kenneth, which promotes real-time data systems and stronger accounta-

bility in health governance.

Back in Nigeria, new interventions are beginning to emerge.

The rollout of the R21 malaria vaccine in states like Kebbi and Bayelsa offers a glimmer of hope, particularly for children like Shehu.

Yet, for many families, access remains uneven, and the gap between innovation and impact persists.

One of the most pressing concerns raised during the assembly was sustainability.

Mr Aruna Fallah, Acting Director for Administration and Finance, WAHO, pointed to the risks of continued reliance on donor funding.

At the same time, the technical and financial partners, Mr Dionke Fofana, Lead of the WAHO partner, called for stronger domestic investment and institutional stability.

Without it, experts warn, progress may stall.

Increasingly, experts are recognis-

ing that malaria control is not just technical, it is deeply social.

Dr Monique Murindahabi, senior public health expert specialising in malaria control and elimination in Africa, highlighted the need to integrate community realities into interventions, from engaging traditional leaders to addressing gender dynamics and behavioural barriers.

Experts say, ultimately, the success of any intervention depends on whether it is accepted and used.

As Dr Alie Wurie, Director of Primary Health Care at the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) in Sierra Leone, noted, cross-border surveillance and coordinated responses are essential in tackling malaria and emerging resistance.

As the meeting concluded, commitments were renewed and frameworks adopted.

But the real work lies ahead.

As Prof. Charles Senessie, Deputy Minister of Health, Sierra Leone, observed, the region had an opportunity to align ambition with action.

For Salisu in Kebbi, success will not be measured by declarations in Freetown.

It will be measured by whether her son survives, and thrives.

There is a consensus that ending malaria in West Africa will require more than plans; it will demand consistent action, sustained investment, and health systems that reach even the most remote communities.

Until that happens, analysts argue that the distance between policy and people will remain, and children like Shehu will continue to pay the price. (NAN Feature).

## NPFL Thriller: Rangers, Rivers United take title Race to final Day

The 2025/26 Nigeria Premier Football League has delivered a finale worthy of its billing, with the title race and relegation battle set to go down to the wire after a dramatic Matchday 37.

At the top, Rangers International F.C. held their nerve at the Cathedral, defeating Bendel Insurance F.C. 2-1 to remain in pole position. Veteran striker Godwin Obaje was the hero, opening the scoring in the 15th minute and converting a second-half penalty

after Alex Owoifaleye had restored parity for the visitors. The Flying Antelopes now head into the final round knowing that one last victory could crown them champions.

Breathing down their necks are Rivers United F.C., who produced one of the comebacks of the season in Bauchi. Twice behind against Wikki Tourists F.C., Finidi George's men roared back to win 3-2 through goals from Handsome Surveyor, Chijioke Mbaoma and Taofeek Otani-

yi. The victory secured a CAF Champions League ticket and kept Rivers United within touching distance of the title, just one point behind Rangers.

In Aba, Abia Warriors F.C. saw their continental hopes collapse in stunning fashion as Kun Khalifat FC stormed to a 2-0 win. Uchekukwu Onuoha struck twice to silence the home crowd and guarantee Kun Khalifat's top-flight status for next season. Elsewhere, Kwara United F.C.

boosted their survival hopes with a commanding 2-0 victory over Enyimba F.C., thanks to an early brace from Babatunde Bright.

The trapdoor has now opened for Bayelsa United F.C. and Wikki Tourists, whose relegation was confirmed after defeats to Remo Stars F.C. and Rivers United respectively. Remo Stars rallied from behind to beat Bayelsa United 2-1, with Alex Oyawah and Victor Mbaoma overturning an early setback.



NIGERIA U-17

## CAF Confederation Cup: Shooting Stars, Ikorodu City, in winner-takes-all quest for Confederation Cup ticket

The battle for the Nigeria Premier Football League's remaining CAF Confederation Cup ticket will go down to the wire on the final day of the season, with Shooting Stars and Ikorodu City locked in a tense race for third place finish.

While title contenders, Enugu Rangers International and Rivers United, have already secured Nigeria's slots in next season's CAF Champions League, the contest for the Confederation Cup place remains delicate.

Shooting Stars currently occupy third position with 60 points, holding a narrow two-point advantage over fourth-placed Ikorodu City, who sit on 58 points ahead of the 24 May decisive fixtures.

The Ibadan side is in pole position and needs only to avoid defeat away to Niger Tornadoes to confirm a return to continental football next season.

However, Ikorodu City still has a fighting chance of snatching the ticket.

The Lagos-based club must defeat title-chasing Rangers and hope Shooting Stars stumble against Niger Tornadoes to overturn the deficit and leapfrog the Oluyole Warriors into third place.

Their clash against Rangers is expected to rank among the standout fixtures of the final day, with both teams carrying huge

ambitions into the encounter.

For Ikorodu City, the situation revives painful memories from last season when they chased a continental ticket from two fronts but ended up empty-handed.

The club narrowly missed out on third place after suffering a heavy 4-1 defeat to eventual champions Remo Stars in Ikenne on the final day, despite taking the lead in the encounter. The result pushed them down to fourth position.



CONFEDERATION CUP

## Court begins hearing May 13 in case between Gwagwalada Football Stakeholders' and FCT Minister

Justice M. G. Umar of Federal High Court 5, Abuja, has fixed Wednesday, May 13, for hearing in a suit filed by the Gwagwalada Football Stakeholders against the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

The case, which was first mentioned in March, was adjourned after the absence of the FCT Minister in court.

The Gwagwalada Football Stakeholders, who are the claimant/applicant in the matter, were

fully represented during the proceedings by their counsel, Babatunde Akintade Legal Consult.

At the last sitting, Justice Umar ruled that the matter be adjourned to allow the Minister of the FCT the opportunity to appear before the court for hearing.

Speaking after the proceedings, lead counsel to the Gwagwalada Football Stakeholders, Babatunde Akintade, expressed optimism that the defendant would appear in court on the new hearing date.

Akintade said the stakeholders were not making unreasonable demands but were only seeking transparency concerning sports infrastructure projects in Gwagwalada and across the Fed-



NYESOM WIKE

## NFF spent ₦72m for U-17 accommodation in 39 days

A top official of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has disclosed that the federation, the body responsible for the running and managing of football in Nigeria spent a whopping sum of ₦72m for Nigeria's U-17 on accommodation for 39 days during its last camping in Abuja.

Recently, the NFF President, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, spoke

with Osasu Obayiuwana, where he lamented about the huge bills the football house is spending on accommodation for the national teams.

"As a federation, we are spending so much on hotel bills, especially for our youth teams. Imagine camping players for several months and hotels giving us a bill of ₦15,000. for a single meal per player," he was quoted as saying.

## Lekjaa re-elected as FRMF President for fourth term

Fouzi Lekjaa has been re-elected as President of the Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF) for a fourth term in office.

Lekjaa, who first became president of the Moroccan football governing body in 2014, continues to strengthen his influence in African and global football administration following another successful tenure renewal.

The Moroccan football administrator has also maintained a strong presence within international football bodies in recent years.

In March 2025, Lekjaa secured re-election to the FIFA Council as a representative of the Confederation of African Football

(CAF).

He won by a landslide after polling 49 out of 52 votes, extending his mandate on the council until 2029.

Further recognition came in April 2025 when he was appointed as the First Vice-President of CAF, underlining his growing influence within African football leadership.

Lekjaa also retained his place on the Executive Council of the Union of Arab Football Associations (UAEFA) after being re-elected in September 2025.

His continued rise in football administration is widely seen as a reflection of Morocco's increasing prominence in global football affairs

## Lagos set for Global Table Tennis showdown as WTT contender



JAPAN

Top table tennis nations, including Japan, the Republic, Germany and France, will headline the 2026 WTT Contender Lagos, which serves off from May 19 to 24 at the Molade Okoya-Thomas Hall of the Teslim Balogun Stadium in Lagos.

The Lagos tournament, regarded as one of the most colourful and energetic stops on the World Table Tennis (WTT) calendar, is one of only 10 events listed in the 2026 WTT Contender Series.

Players from Denmark, the

United States, India, Portugal, Romania, Cameroon, Benin Republic, Belgium, Canada, Togo, the Netherlands, Ghana, Wales, Egypt, Italy, Chile, Slovenia and host nation Nigeria are also expected to compete for honours in the five-day tournament.

Competitors will battle for a share of the \$100,000 prize money as interest in the Lagos event continues to grow among elite and emerging players attracted by the atmosphere and hospitality associated with the tournament.



FOUZI LEKJAA

# Does Chikelue Iloenyosi deserve a seat at the table?

TOLULOPE OGUNTMEHIN

For years, former Nigerian internationals have often been criticised for demanding recognition and influence in football administration without first making meaningful contributions to their communities or to the development of the game. Many were accused of operating with a sense of entitlement—expecting the nation to rally around them whenever challenges arose, while offering little in return.

That narrative, however, is beginning to change.

A growing number of ex-internationals are shifting from rhetoric to service, investing their time, resources and experience in grassroots football and community development. Among those who stand out is Chikelue Iloenyosi.

Known as much for his imposing presence as for his determination, Iloenyosi has built a football career that commands respect. He represented Nigeria at the 1999 FIFA World Youth Championship, featured in the football event at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, and earned 15 senior caps for the Nigeria national football team.

Chikelue Iloenyosi enjoyed a distinguished professional career that took him from Nigerian clubs such as Enugu Rangers, El-Kanemi Warriors FC and Iwuanyanwu Nationale F.C. to notable overseas sides including Fenerbahçe S.K., Tennis Borussia Berlin, Çaykur Rizespor and Asteras Tripolis F.C.

His passion for Nigerian football, however, extended far beyond his achievements on the pitch. Iloenyosi has long shown a deep interest in the administrative and structural development of the game and has never hesitated to challenge practices he believed were detrimental to football growth.

In 2011, his activism led to a temporary suspension by the Nigeria Football Federation after he became involved with a rival football body advocating reform. The ban was later lifted following the intervention of FIFA, reinforcing his standing as a committed advocate for positive change in Nigerian football.

He went on to found the 042 Football Legends Association, a charitable organisation dedicated to supporting retired footballers, assisting the families of deceased players, and mentoring young talents. The association has paid hospital bills for several former players facing health challenges and currently sponsors the education of dozens of children of ex-footballers.

Iloenyosi has also served as Senior Special Adviser to former NFF President Amaju Pinnick and as Technical Adviser to the Nigeria National League. These roles gave him practical experience in football administration and governance.

Chikelue Iloenyosi is not one to shy away from bold decisions or difficult challenges. In 2020, when he appeared set to emerge unopposed as Chairman of the Anambra State Football Association, a last-minute opposition coalition denied him victory, leaving him with just one vote out of



CHIKELUE ILOENYOSI AND NFF PRESIDENT IBRAHIM GUSAU (MIDDLE) AND SOME NFF OFFICIAL

20 and short of the required simple majority.

For many, such a setback would have marked the end of the journey. For Iloenyosi, it was merely a temporary detour. He remained steadfast, patient, and focused, waiting for the right moment to make his move. His persistence was eventually rewarded when he emerged as Chairman of the Anambra State FA.

That is the essence of Chikelue Iloenyosi: resilient, strategic, and unwavering in the face of adversity. He understands that true leadership is not about how quickly one rises, but about the determination to stay the course until the opportunity finally comes.

That persistence speaks volumes about his character.

Leadership is not about fame or past glory. It is about service, resilience and a sustained commitment to making a difference. By those standards, Chikelue Iloenyosi has earned his place.

He has represented Nigeria with distinction, invested in the welfare of former players, mentored young footballers, and gained hands-on administrative experience. Most importantly, he has shown that he is prepared to serve before seeking power.

So, does Chikelue Iloenyosi deserve a seat on the board of Nigeria Football Federation?

The answer is yes.

He has paid his dues. He has demonstrated capacity. And he has shown that his ambition is rooted not in entitlement, but in a genuine desire to contribute to the growth of football and the advancement of the South-East and Nigeria at large.



*Leadership is not about fame or past glory. It is about service, resilience and a sustained commitment to making a difference. By those standards, Chikelue Iloenyosi has earned his place*



NFF PRESIDENT IBRAHIM GUSAU AND CHIKELUE ILOENYOSI

**Sports**



# Betting expert urges youths to embrace emerging opportunities responsibly

**A** betting investor, John Egbokhan, has urged Nigerians, especially youths, to explore opportunities within the nation's expanding betting and gaming industry responsibly. Egbokhan gave the advice yesterday during an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria

(NAN), where he discussed regulation, taxation, and industry prospects.

He described Nigeria's betting market as one undergoing major transformation, driven by legal reforms, fiscal policies, and increased government oversight. "Nigeria's betting industry

is entering a defining period, shaped by tax reforms and regulatory changes affecting operators and everyday players," he said.

He explained that sports betting remained legal since the enactment of the National Lottery Act in 2005.

According to him, the federal regulatory framework historically placed oversight under the National Lottery Regulatory Commission.

"The commission was responsible for licensing operators and monitoring lottery and gaming activities across the country," he stated.

He, however, noted that recent legal developments had significantly changed the industry's regulatory structure.

Egbokhan said a 2024 Supreme Court ruling shifted pri-

mary gaming oversight to state governments, reshaping the regulatory landscape.

"States are now assuming greater control over betting and gaming activities within their jurisdictions," he said.

He cited Lagos State Lotteries and Gaming Authority as an example of growing state-level oversight.

"This decentralised system means operators and players must pay closer attention to state-specific rules and compliance obligations," he added.

Egbokhan also highlighted the increasing influence of taxation on betting activities, particularly within Lagos State.

"In Lagos, a five per cent withholding tax on gaming winnings now applies at payout, directly affecting bettors' earnings," he explained.



BETTING CENTER



WORLD ATHLETICS

## World Athletics rejects IOC proposal to lift Belarus ban

**W**orld Athletics has rejected a recommendation from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to lift the ban preventing Belarusian athletes and teams from competing under their national flag.

The IOC executive board on Thursday urged international sports federations and event organisers to allow Belarus to return to international competition, while maintaining restrictions on Russia.

Both Russia and Belarus were suspended from Olympic competition following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, with Belarus considered a close ally of Russia.

In 2023, the IOC introduced a partial relaxation of the sanc-

tions, permitting athletes from both nations to compete as neutral athletes.

According to the IOC, Belarus National Olympic Committee remains "in good standing" and complies with the Olympic Charter.

The body also stated that Belarusian athletes competing as Individual Neutral Athletes (AINs) at several international events, including the Paris 2024 Olympics and Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, did so without any incidents.

The IOC further stressed that athletes should not be restricted from international competition because of actions taken by their governments, including involvement in wars or conflicts.

## La Liga: Barcelona seal 29th LaLiga title with 2-0 Clasico win over Real Madrid

**B**arcelona turned the Clasico into a coronation on Sunday, swatting aside Real Madrid 2-0 at a roaring Camp Nou to claim their 29th LaLiga title.

Hansi Flick's side moved to an unassailable 91 points, 14 clear of second-placed Real with three games remaining.

The triumph capped a dominant campaign in which they lost only four league matches. Villarreal are third on 69 points.

Real arrived needing victory to keep their wafer-thin title hopes alive, but Marcus Rashford crushed those aspirations just nine minutes into the game.

Antonio Rudiger fouled Ferran Torres just outside the box, and Rashford bent a superb free kick into Thibaut Courtois' top-left corner, giving Barcelona the early lead and sending the home crowd into rapture.

Nine minutes later, Barcelona doubled the lead. Fermin Lopez crossed into the area, and Dani Olmo produced a clever back-heel that sent the ball into the path of Torres, who rifled a fierce strike into the top corner.

The win completed back-to-back league titles for Flick, who also delivered the LaLiga and Copa del Rey double in his first season last year.

Both sides were heavily depleted. Barcelona were without Lamine Yamal, Raphinha and Jules Kounde from the starting lineup.

Real's list of missing players was longer, with Eder Militao, Dani Carvajal, Ferland Mendy, Arda Guler and Rodrygo all absent. Federico Valverde also missed out after suffering a head injury following a midweek changing-room fight with team-mate Aurelien Tchouameni, with both players fined 500,000 euros over the incident.



BARCELONA TEAM

## Premier League: Arsenal survive huge scare to edge towards title

**A**rsenal edged a step closer to the Premier League title with Leandro Trossard's late goal and a slice of fortune in stoppage time, securing

a precious 1-0 victory at relegation-threatened West Ham United to put them five points clear on Sunday. Soccer

Mikel Arteta's side looked like

dropping points to keep the door ajar for chasing Manchester City, but Trossard's 83rd-minute goal means that victories over Burnley and Crystal Palace will guarantee their first English crown since 2004.

An off-key Arsenal were living on their nerves and survived a huge scare in stoppage time as West Ham's Callum Wilson fired home in a goalmouth scramble, but his effort was ruled out for a foul on Arsenal keeper David Raya after a lengthy VAR check.

It completed a stunning week for Arsenal, who reached the Champions League final for the first time since 2006 by beating Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.



ARSENAL PLAYERS CELEBRATING A GOAL

## Chess: Akintoye becomes highest-rated Nigerian Chess player in history

**N**igerian chess star Abdulrahman Abdulraheem Akintoye has become the highest-rated Nigerian chess player in history after attaining a live rating of 2389 at the 2026 Nigeria Chess Olympiad Qualifiers.

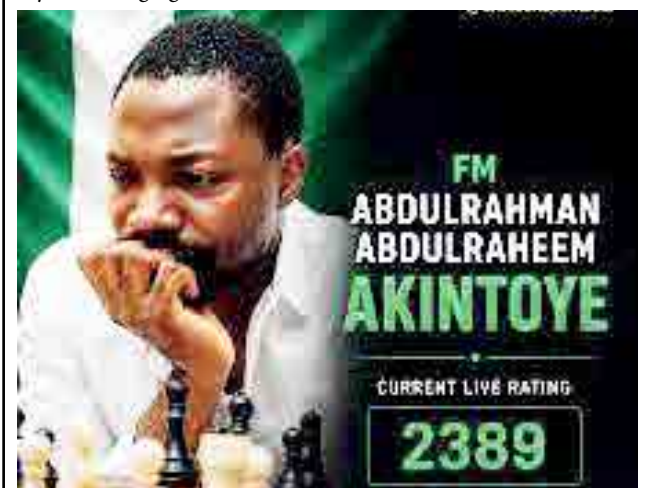
Akintoye achieved the remarkable milestone after gaining 24 rating points during the competition, surpassing the previous all-time Nigerian record of 2368 set by Daniel Anwuli.

The historic achievement marks a major breakthrough for Nigerian chess, with Akintoye now edging closer to the

prestigious 2400 rating mark. His impressive performances at the Olympiad Qualifiers further underline his rapid rise in the chess scene and strengthen his status as one of the country's brightest talents.

Akintoye's new live rating of 2389 now stands as the highest ever attained by a Nigerian player, eclipsing a long-standing benchmark held by International Master Daniel Anwuli.

With the "Road to 2400" now firmly in sight, the Nigerian chess community will be watching closely as Akintoye continues his pursuit of another historic milestone.



## Team Nigeria's 41-Athlete squad departs for 2026 African Senior Athletics Championships in Accra

**T**eam Nigeria will depart for Accra, Ghana, on Monday for the 2026 African Sen-

ior Athletics Championships, where 41 athletes will represent the country in the six-day meet

scheduled for May 12-17.

Several of the foreign-based athletes have already arrived in Accra ahead of the rest of the contingent. According to a statement from the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), the delegation will be led by AFN President Chief Tonobok Okowa. The squad comprises 17 male and 24 female athletes who will compete across 26 track and field events.

The team blends home-based and overseas professionals and will operate under the

technical direction of AFN Technical Director Gabriel Okon. He will be supported by nine coaches, including National Head Coach Solomon Aliyu for hurdles, Olu Sule for horizontal jumps, Deji Aliu for sprints, Gabriel Opuana for throws, Kolawole Adebayo for vertical jumps, Saheed Akinpelu for long sprints, Mavuah Esabunor for short sprints, Pade Lawal for women's sprints, and Henry Okorie as athlete representative.



TEAM NIGERIA

# FEATURE



## Operation Sindoor: India's anti-terror campaign and critical lessons for Nigeria

SUMAILA OGBAJE (NAN)

India's recent commemoration of the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor has again drawn global attention to evolving counter-terrorism strategies and the growing role of technology, doctrine and political will in modern warfare.

Operation Sindoor refers to a high-intensity Indian military and diplomatic campaign launched on May 7, 2025, following a brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam.

Marked by coordinated changes of official profile pictures by top government officials, the anniversary served not only as a symbolic gesture but also as a reaffirmation of India's firm stance against terrorism.

Speaking recently on the operation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the operation as a defining moment in India's security history, emphasising that it demonstrated "unparalleled courage, precision and resolve".

The coordinated gesture by the External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior officials, reinforces what observers describe as a deliberate effort to institutionalize national security consciousness.

Beyond political leadership, India's military high command has also offered deeper insight into the operation, describing it as a strategic turning point rather than a one-off response.

Former Director General of Military Operations, Lt.-Gen. Rajiv Ghai, characterised Operation Sindoor as a defining moment in India's strategic journey.

"It has been a year to the day since Operation Sindoor was conducted, and as the then Director General of Military Operations, I look back at not only a military operation but possibly a defining moment in India's strategic journey."

He said the operation reflected a deliberate shift from previous approaches, as India moved to target terrorist infrastructure beyond its immediate borders.

"Operation Sindoor saw India very consciously and coherently go beyond its erstwhile approaches and methods and target terror across the Line of Control and our international boundary with Pakistan."

Ghai stressed that the operation was not a conclusion, but the beginning of a sustained campaign.

He said that Operation Sindoor was not an end but a beginning.

According to him, India's fight against terror will go on, affirming that the country will continue to defend its sovereignty and citizens decisively and professionally.

He further highlighted the clarity of political direction and operational freedom granted to the armed forces.



OPERATION SINDOOR, HIGH-INTENSITY INDIAN MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC

"With precision, proportionality and clarity of purpose, it was a statement of resolve, responsibility and strategic restraint by a nation.

"From the outset, the government gave us two clear directions—clear political-military objectives and the operational flexibility to achieve these.

"The clearly stated end—to destroy and degrade terror ecosystems, disrupt their planning, and deter future aggression from these bases—was very unambiguously spelt out. Concurrently, the armed forces were entrusted with the wherewithal to plan and execute this operation," he said.

Operationally, Indian forces reportedly struck multiple terror bases across Pakistan and Pakistan-administered territories, destroying key infrastructure linked to groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul Mujahideen.

According to the Indian military, more than 100 terrorists have been killed during the strikes.

The military said it also triggered a brief but intense military exchange, including drone attacks and artillery shelling, before a ceasefire was reached following high-level military engagements between both sides.

Military experts, including retired Lt.-Gen. Sujeet Dharkar, have highlighted the unprecedented deployment of advanced systems, including long-range air defence and loitering munitions.

More so, retired Lt.-Gen. Dhruv Katoch, underscored the "zero tolerance" doctrine—an approach signalling decisive consequences for terrorist actions.

Austrian military historian, Tom Cooper, also pointed to the strategic implications of the operation, particularly its demonstration of expand-

ed strike capability.

For Nigeria, the developments resonate strongly.

The country's counter-terrorism efforts are largely driven by operations such as Operation Hadin Kai, alongside other internal security missions targeting banditry and violent extremism.

In spite of the recorded gains, including neutralisation of insurgents and rescue of abductees, challenges persist due to evolving tactics by non-state actors, difficult terrain and cross-border dynamics.

Against this backdrop, Operation Sindoor offers critical lessons for Nigeria's security architecture.

**“**  
*They say Operation Sindoor stands as a compelling case study in modern counter-terrorism, demonstrating how clarity of purpose, political backing and operational flexibility can shape outcomes.*  
**”**

According to military experts, lesson one is political will and operational clarity—a key takeaway from Operation Sindoor is the alignment between political leadership and military execution.

As Ghai's underscored, clearly defined objectives and operational flexibility contributed to mission success.

For Nigeria, analysts say this highlights the need for sustained political commitment, clear directives and consistent policy support for the armed forces.

Lesson two, according to experts, is intelligence-led precision strikes. The operation reinforces the importance of intelligence-driven warfare and precision targeting.

Rather than broad offensives, targeted strikes based on credible intelligence can yield more effective results while minimising collateral damage.

For Nigeria, strengthening intelligence capabilities across human and technological domains remains a priority.

For experts, lesson three is technology as a force multiplier—Operation Sindoor demonstrated the growing role of drones, air defence systems and precision-guided munitions.

Stakeholders say Nigeria must continue investing in surveillance technologies, unmanned systems and data-driven operations to match evolving threats.

Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, had recently underscored the importance of advanced training and technology-driven operations in strengthening the effectiveness of the Nigerian Army.

Shaibu said modern security challenges required continuous professional training, innovation and the deployment of advanced technology to enhance operational efficiency in counterterrorism

and counterinsurgency operations.

According to him, success on the battlefield is no longer determined by equipment alone, but by the competence, discipline and adaptability of troops.

The army chief highlighted drone technology, combat aviation and modern training approaches as key enablers of future military operations, noting that the Army would continue to leverage such capabilities to improve performance.

Lesson four is Joint-force synergy. The operation highlighted seamless coordination among different arms of the military.

Nigeria's joint task force model provides a foundation, but analysts emphasise the need for improved interoperability, communication systems and logistics integration.

Lesson five is doctrinal evolution. India's shift from restraint to proactiveness reflects the importance of adapting military doctrine to changing realities.

Nigeria, experts say, must continue reviewing its strategies to address emerging threats such as drone-enabled attacks and decentralised insurgent networks.

According to analysts, lesson six is strategic communication—the coordinated national commemoration underscores the role of communication in building public confidence and unity.

In Nigeria, effective messaging can help counter misinformation and strengthen civilian support for military operations.

Lesson seven is regional collaboration. Nigeria's participation in the Multinational Joint Task Force reflects the importance of cross-border cooperation.

However, experts call for deeper intelligence sharing and coordinated strategies to tackle transnational threats.

For policy analysts, lesson eight is self-reliance in defence. As highlighted by Ghai, the emphasis on indigenous capability points to the need for Nigeria to strengthen its local defence industry.

In spite of its lessons, analysts caution that Operation Sindoor cannot be replicated wholesale because Nigeria's security environment differs significantly, requiring context-specific solutions that combine military, political and socio-economic approaches.

They say Operation Sindoor stands as a compelling case study in modern counter-terrorism, demonstrating how clarity of purpose, political backing and operational flexibility can shape outcomes.

According to stakeholders, the lessons for Nigeria are both instructive and urgent: the fight against terrorism demands not only force, but precision, innovation, coordination, and sustained national resolve.

All in all, it is the experts' view that adapting these lessons to local realities could prove decisive in achieving long-term stability as the country continues its battle against insurgency and insecurity. (NAN Feature)