

APC direct primaries deepen grassroots democracy —Dabiri-Erewa

IKORODU (LAGOS)

Mrs Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman of Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM), has commended the peaceful conduct of All Progressives Congress (APC) direct primaries in Lagos East, describing the exercise as transparent and

grassroots-driven.

Dabiri-Erewa spoke on Monday in Lagos during the APC senatorial primaries for Sen. Tokunbo Abiru in Ikorodu,

She said the direct primary system had given party members at the ward level greater participation in the party's decision-making process.

"We saw what happened

during the House of Representatives primaries and now here for the senatorial seat.

"The process has been peaceful and transparent.

"Power has genuinely been transferred to the grassroots," she said.

The primaries attracted a large turnout of party supporters despite Abiru contesting

unopposed, with supporters singing and dancing during the affirmation process.

According to Dabiri-Erewa, the participation reflected growing confidence in the APC's internal democratic process.

"You cannot take people for granted. Everybody wants to have a say in who represents them. That is what will deep-

en democracy and encourage broader participation," she said.

The former lawmaker praised party members in Ikorodu for maintaining orderliness and peaceful conduct throughout the exercise.

"You can see it is like a celebration. There is calmness, people are peaceful and everyone is here to support the party.

"Politics should not be about fighting. It should be about choosing what is best for the people," she added.

Dabiri-Erewa also credited the party's leadership with promoting unity, discipline and internal cohesion among members.

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That The People May Know

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#200

Ogbeide-Ihama wins APC Edo South senatorial ticket

BERNADETTE IDALU

BENIN CITY

A former member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Omoregie Ogbeide-Ihama, has emerged winner of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Edo South Senatorial District primary election following the conclusion of voting in Ovia South West Local Government Area.

The Returning Officer for

Ovia South West, Hon. Joseph Salami, announced Ogbeide-Ihama's victory on Monday at the Iguobazuwa Town Hall Collation Centre, stating that the result was based on the highest number of valid votes cast.

Salami said the exercise, which covered the ten wards in the local government area, was conducted peacefully without any incident of rancour or disruption.

He disclosed that Ogbei-

de-Ihama polled a total of 4,263 votes to defeat Senator Neda Imasuen, who scored 2,131 votes, while Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu came third with 1,065 votes.

According to him, the collation process was transparent and reflected the will of party members in the area.

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, who observed the exercise, commended APC members in

Ovia South West for their large turnout and orderly conduct during the primary election.

Idahosa said the process was credible and transparent, noting that Ogbeide-Ihama had clearly emerged winner in the local government area.

"Everything was transparent and credible; and a winner has emerged in the person of Hon. Omoregie Ogbeide-Ihama," he said.

He added that although

collation of results from other local government areas was ongoing, the party would commence reconciliation efforts immediately after the primaries to strengthen unity ahead of the general election.

"We are one family. Immediately after this exercise, we will embark on a reconciliation move. For us, it is a win-win

for all members of the APC family. There is no loser; it is a victory for all," he stated.

The primary election recorded a large turnout of voters, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, nursing mothers, and youths, who participated in choosing the party's senatorial candidate for the 2027 general elections.

EDSIEC intensifies voter education

● Begins adhoc staff recruitment ahead of LG polls

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Independent Electoral Commission has intensified preparations for the forthcoming July 11 local government elections with a renewed push for civic and voter education in grassroots communities across the state, even as the commission announced the recruitment of ad hoc staff for the exercise.

In a move aimed at deepening democratic participation and voter awareness, EDSIEC's Egor and Igueben field offices, in collaboration with their respective local government councils, convened separate town hall stakeholders' meetings on civic and voter education at the councils secretariat in Egor and Igueben Local Government Areas respectively.

The sensitisation programmes attracted a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including local government officials, traditional and religious leaders, security agencies, civil

society organisations, political party representatives, youth and women groups, persons with disabilities, community leaders, media practitioners and members of the public.

Chairman of EDSIEC, Jonathan Aifuobhokhan, who was represented at both meetings by Dr. Suleman Ikhuriah, reaffirmed the commission's commitment to strengthening grassroots democracy through sustained voter enlightenment and stakeholder engagement.

Dr. Ikhuriah, who also served as the resource person and facilitator at both meetings, delivered a lecture titled, "Strengthening Democratic Participation at the Grassroots: The Role of Citizens in Local Government Elections." He stressed the importance of active citizen participation in governance, insisting that democracy can only flourish where people are actively engaged in electoral processes.

Also present at the engage-

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FIRST CHIEF CLERKS CONVENTION:

A cross-section of participants, during the opening of Nigerian Army First Chief Clerks Convention in Ibadan on Monday.

Edo cracks down on cultism, warns politicians against election violence —Pg 3

\$500m research fund shows Nigeria's readiness for knowledge economy —Onwualu —Pg 5

At least 100 deaths reported in Ebola outbreak in DR Congo as six Americans exposed —Pg 15

S/Africa lauds Nigeria's readiness for 2026 Commonwealth Fencing Championships —Pg 23

Bishop urges FG to rejig security architecture to tackle insecurity

BADAGRY (LAGOS)

Rev. Babatunde Adeyemi of the Anglican Communion, Badagry, Lagos, has urged the Federal Government on Monday to reorganise Nigeria's security architecture to effectively tackle growing insecurity across the country.

Adeyemi made the appeal during the 1st Session of the 8th Synod and Valedictory Synod of the Bishop at the Cathedral Church of St. Thomas, Badagry, Lagos.

The theme of the synod was "Gratitude."

According to the bishop, the kidnapping of over 80 school-children in Borno and Oyo states

about 24 hours apart is not good for the image of the country.

"The bandits and terrorists behave as if they have no children. Why target our schools?"

"Education is the best legacy one can give to a child, but with what these people are doing, the number of out-of-school children will continue to increase.

"Already, we have over 10 million children out of school. Education is enlightenment.

"How can parents send their children to school when they are not sure of their security?"

"It is a wake-up call to all concerned to protect our primary, secondary and tertiary institutions with every means available," he said.

He urged the National As-

sembly to pass the bill on state police without further delay for the presidential assent.

According to him, states already have vigilante groups, while Lagos has the Neighbourhood Watch.

"Other states like Osun, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti have the Amotekun Corps. These can transform into state police.

"If things are properly worked out, the local governments can also have Local Authority Police.

"All these were in existence

before the 1966 coup. Therefore, for the sake of peace and progress, we need state police.

"The Nigeria Police Force alone cannot secure the country. Many of its personnel also lack the motivation to do the work," he said.

On the economic hardship in the country, the bishop urged the people to support the masses in cushioning the effects of the war involving the United States, Israel and Iran, which has affected fuel supply worldwide.

He said that since the advent of the current administration, the cost of transportation had increased astronomically, despite Nigeria being one of the largest producers of crude oil.

"If the cost of transportation is drastically reduced, we are sure that the cost of living will become bearable.

"The government should encourage the Dangote Refinery by supplying crude oil to it in Naira.

"It is also necessary to assist other local refineries to

function instead of importing petrol. The government exists to help the masses; that is why they were elected.

"If you are not going to subsidise fuel, then turn to agriculture and secure communities producing food from bandits and terrorists who are displacing them," he said.

On the theme of gratitude, Adeyemi said he chose it to express his gratitude to God and to appreciate those who assisted him in his ministry in Badagry.

APC direct primaries deepen...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

She further expressed support for the administration of President Bola Tinubu, describing his economic reforms as difficult but necessary for national development.

According to her, the administration's policies are beginning to stabilise the economy despite the temporary hardship associated with the reforms.

"There is no dual exchange rate system anymore, and the economy is being placed on a more stable path.

"The reforms are tough, but only a courageous leader could have taken such decisions," she said.

She added that the nation's economic reforms were receiving international recogni-

tion, citing recent discussions in Kigali, Rwanda, where the administration's policies were positively acknowledged.

Dabiri-Erewa urged APC members to continue mobilising support for President Tinubu ahead of future elections, stressing the need for continuity to fully implement the administration's agenda.

"He has promised good governance, transparency and sincerity, and we believe in his leadership.

"We will work tirelessly to ensure free and successful elections," she said.

She said the Lagos East Senatorial District remained one of the APC's major strongholds in Lagos State as party leaders continued efforts to consolidate support ahead of future electoral contests.

EDSIEC intensifies voter...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ments were EDSIEC Commissioners, Osarodion Hope Imafidon and Anthony Aikpoghome.

At the Egor stakeholders' meeting, the Acting Chairman of Egor Local Government Council, Hon. Osa-Eribo, alongside the Vice Chairman, members of the Executive Council, the Electoral Officer for Egor Local Government Area, Mr. Imonikhe Abu, as well as the Leader and councillors of the legislative arm, participated in deliberations focused on improving voter participation and civic responsibility.

Similarly, the Igueben meeting had in attendance the Executive Chairman of Igueben Local Government Council, Hon. Henshaw Elimihe, members of the Executive Council, the Electoral Officer for Igueben Local Government Area, Mr. Andrew Otakhor, and councillors of the legislative arm of the council.

Speaking on behalf of the commission, the EDSIEC chairman underscored that civic and voter education remained a collective responsibility requiring strong collaboration among electoral institutions, government agencies, traditional and religious institutions, community leaders, civil society organisations, youth and women

groups, the media and other critical stakeholders.

He commended the Egor and Igueben councils for their support in facilitating the successful hosting of the town hall meetings, describing their commitment to grassroots democratic engagement and voter sensitisation as commendable.

In his presentation, Dr. Ikhuorhiah emphasised that the future of grassroots development in Egor and Igueben largely depended on citizens' willingness to participate responsibly in local government elections.

"Every vote matters. Every citizen matters. Every community matters," he declared.

Meanwhile, EDSIEC announced that it has commenced the recruitment of ad hoc staff for the 2026 local government council elections across the state. The commission advised interested applicants seeking further information to visit its official Facebook page, Edo State Independent Electoral Commission, for details on the recruitment process.

The commission also reminded political parties participating in the election to submit the names of their polling agents to the EDSIEC headquarters located along Oko-Ogba Road, Benin City, ahead of the polls.



COLLATION OF RESULTS:

R-L: Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa; All Progressives Congress (APC) stalwart in Edo South, Rt. Maj.-Gen. Charles Airhiavbere; Edo State APC Secretary, Hon. Lawrence Okah and Member, House of Representatives representing Ovia Federal Constituency, Hon. Omosede Igbinedion, during the collation of results from Edo South Senatorial District at Urhokpota Hall, Benin City on Monday. Photo: Moses Obob.

SDP reaffirms Gabam's expulsion after INEC meeting

ABUJA

The National Chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) Prof. Sadiq Gombe, on Monday insisted that the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) decision expelling former chairman, Alhaji Shehu Gabam, remains valid and binding.

Gombe stated this after a closed-door meeting between party leaders and officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Abuja.

The meeting, convened by INEC, was part of efforts to resolve the ongoing leadership dispute within the party ahead

of preparations for the 2027 general elections.

Gombe said the SDP attended the engagement out of respect for INEC and in response to its invitation for an alternative dispute resolution process.

According to him, 11 members of the party's National Working Committee (NWC), alongside other stakeholders, participated in the meeting.

He said the NEC had at a recent meeting ratified the current NWC leadership and approved the suspension and expulsion of Gabam.

Gombe added that the NEC meeting was duly communicated to INEC and monitored

by its officials, with certified true copies of the proceedings submitted.

"We are here because of the respect we have for INEC and to honour its invitation for alternative dispute resolution, but we made it categorically clear that the SDP has the constitutional authority to manage its internal affairs," he said.

He said the disciplinary action against Gabam followed allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and breach of the party's constitution as well as the Electoral Act.

Gombe argued that under Article 19(C) of the party's constitution, any disciplined member

has five working days to appeal through internal mechanisms.

He said Gabam neither appealed internally nor approached a competent court within the stipulated period.

"From the day the NEC ratified his expulsion, he ceased to be a member of the party. He did not exhaust the internal mechanisms provided by the constitution," he said.

Gombe also dismissed claims that leadership recognition within the party could be determined through the INEC portal, insisting that political parties retain constitutional powers over internal administration and leadership matters.

AI-driven networking will shape next phase of enterprise growth —TD Africa

LAGOS

TD Africa, a technology distribution company has said that AI-driven networking is key to the next wave of enterprise transformation as companies shift to smarter, faster and more secure systems.

Its Coordinating Managing Director, Mrs Chioma Chimere said this in a statement on Monday, following a high-level partner engagement hosted alongside Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) Operated by Selectium in Lagos.

Chimere said networking had evolved beyond basic connectivity into a strategic foundation supporting enterprise transfor-

mation, business resilience and long-term digital competitiveness across industries and operational environments.

According to her, the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud systems and remote operational models had significantly increased demand for secure, scalable and intelligent enterprise infrastructure globally.

"Networking today is no longer just about connectivity; it has become the backbone of enterprise transformation.

Chimere also highlighted the growing enterprise dependence on intelligent digital infrastructure systems.

She said organisations embracing AI and cloud-driven operations now required flexible infrastructure capable of supporting innovation, advanced security frameworks and rapidly changing operational demands.

Chimere added that TD Africa remained committed to equipping partners and businesses with technologies, technical support and strategic insights needed for successful digital transformation across sectors.

According to her, the collaboration with HPE reflected a shared commitment toward helping organisations modernise confidently while preparing for the future of AI-driven digital innovation and connectivity.

Also, Dr Ifee Kojo, Country Manager of HPE (Operated by Selectium) said AI was increasingly transforming enterprise connectivity into smarter and more responsive infrastructure ecosystems.

Kojo said businesses seeking competitiveness within rapidly evolving markets required infrastructure capable of proactively addressing security threats, scalability challenges and rising complexities across digital operational environments.

"HPE is driving transformation across the technology ecosystem, from the data centre to the edge, from IoT to AI-powered connectivity," she said.

NEWS

Okpebholo trains 100 Edo youths for oil palm jobs as ESOPP expands skills scheme

OGGBEBOR IKPONMWOSA

The Edo State Government has intensified efforts to tackle youth unemployment and deepen agricultural development as the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP) launched the second cohort of its Manpower Development Programme, with 100 youths from oil palm-producing communities selected for specialised training and employment opportunities in the sector.

The six-month programme, inaugurated at the Edo State College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Iguoriakhi, is being implemented in partnership with Presco Plc and Okomu Oil Palm Company, reinforcing Governor Monday Okpebholo's drive to expand economic opportunities through agriculture.

The trainees, drawn from

oil palm host communities in Orhionmwon, Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Areas, will undergo intensive training free of charge, receive stipends throughout the programme and stand a chance of securing employment in oil palm companies operating across the state upon successful completion.

Speaking at the inauguration, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mrs Rebecca Osedebamen Bamaiyi, who represented the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, described the initiative as a strategic investment in human capital and Edo's agricultural future.

She said the programme reflects Governor Okpebholo's commitment to youth empowerment and agricultural transformation under the administration's SHINE Agenda.

According to her, the governor has demonstrated through practical actions that transforming Edo's agricultural economy remains a major policy priority.

"His Excellency has demonstrated that transforming Edo State's agricultural economy is not an aspiration; it is a policy priority backed by action," she said.

Provost of the Edo State College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr Andrew Osaigbovo Omosefe, commended

the governor for revitalising the institution and creating an enabling environment for large-scale skills acquisition initiatives.

He said the manpower programme aligns with the administration's broader vision for agriculture and human capital development, urging

beneficiaries to maximise the opportunity created through government investment.

General Manager of ESOPP, Mr Churchill Obob, expressed optimism over the success of the second batch, citing the achievements recorded by participants in the first cohort.

Ikoku pushes 'University 2.0' reform, seeks TETFund access for private Varsities

EDWARD OSEGHE

OKADA

Africa's foremost productivity consultant, Dr Sam Ikoku, has urged Nigerian private universities to embrace innovation-driven reforms, calling on Igbinedion University, Okada, to adopt a five-year strategic roadmap aimed at transforming the institution into a "University 2.0."

Ikoku also appealed to the Federal Government to reconsider the exclusion of private universities from TETFund

research grants, arguing that supporting research in private institutions should be seen as a strategic investment in national innovation rather than an operational subsidy.

He made the call while delivering the keynote address at the 27th Founder's Day ceremony of Igbinedion University held at the institution's Library Conference Hall in Okada, Edo State.

Speaking on the theme, "Keeping the University Dream in a Fragile Ecosystem," Ikoku said Nigerian universities must

move beyond traditional academic systems to remain relevant in an increasingly digital and innovation-driven global economy.

He stressed that universities must reposition to respond to emerging realities such as the digital economy, energy transition and technology-led industries.

"The university of 1999 was built for a different Nigeria. The university of 2026 must be designed for the Nigeria we are becoming," he said.

Ikoku explained that his proposed "University 2.0 Model" would be anchored

on strategic pillars including revenue generation, institutional excellence, artificial intelligence-driven talent development, infrastructure expansion, innovation, commercialisation, workforce transformation and stronger governance systems.

He challenged Igbinedion University, Nigeria's first private university, to champion reforms in the Education Tax framework while advocating a five-year moratorium on the establishment of new private universities to improve quality standards.

"Allow quality to catch up with quantity," he said.

**SENATORIAL DISTRICT PRIMARY ELECTION:**

Returning Officer for Ovia South-West Local Government Area, Hon. Joseph Salami (left) and Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, during the Edo South Senatorial District primary election of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Iguobazuwa. Photo: Moses Obob

Edo cracks down on cultism, warns politicians against election violence

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has issued a stern warning against cultism and politically motivated violence, declaring that no individual or political group will be allowed to exploit the ongoing primary election season to foment unrest across the state.

In a strongly worded statement, the government reaffirmed its total ban on cult-related activities, warning that anyone found using cult networks to intimidate political opponents or disrupt electoral processes would face severe legal consequences.

The state government said concerns had emerged over possible politically motivated cult activity during party primaries, stressing that democratic processes would not be used as a cover for criminality.

"The ban on cultism in Edo State is total, absolute and non-negotiable," the government declared, warning that offenders would be prosecuted regardless of political affiliation or social standing.

The administration reiterated that security remains a core pillar of Governor Monday Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda, noting that the protection of lives, property and democratic rights

remains central to governance.

To forestall any breakdown of law and order, security agencies including the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services and other relevant formations have been placed on heightened alert across the state's three senatorial districts.

According to the government, law enforcement agencies have been directed to respond swiftly to reports of cult activity, electoral intimidation or violence during the primary election period.

The government further warned politicians and criminal elements against weaponising cult groups to attack opponents or destabilise communities, insisting that such

acts would be treated as criminal offences and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Residents were urged to report suspicious movements, threats and acts of violence through security agencies and state emergency channels, with assurances that whistle-blowers would be protected.

Calling for peaceful participation in the electoral process, the government urged political parties, aspirants, delegates, traditional rulers, youth groups and other stakeholders to reject cultism and uphold peace during the election season.

"Edo will remain peaceful, and its elections will be free, fair and safe for every citizen," the statement added.

Akubeze honours Catholic media practitioners, warns against over-reliance on AI

BENIN CITY

The Catholic Archbishop of Benin City, Augustine Obiora Akubeze, has cautioned against excessive reliance on artificial intelligence (AI), insisting that technology must never replace the unique human capacity for empathy, conscience, and moral responsibility in communication.

Archbishop Akubeze gave the warning on Sunday during activities marking the 60th World Day of Social Communications and the end of COMWEEK 2026, where he presented Media Apostle Awards to members of the Catholic Media Practitioners Association of Nigeria (CAM-PAN) in recognition of their contributions to evangelisation through journalism.

The event, held at St. Anthony Catholic Church, featured a thanksgiving Mass officiated by the Archbishop and served as a platform for recognising outstanding Catholic media professionals and a media-compliant couple for exemplary service.

In his homily, Archbishop Akubeze said this year's communications theme, "Preserving Human Voices and Faces," chosen by Pope Leo XIV, was intended to draw attention to the growing influence of artificial intelligence on human life and communication.

According to him, while AI offers speed and efficiency, it cannot replace the distinctly human ability to empathise, exercise moral judgement, and communicate with conscience.

World Orthodontic Day: NAO President urges Nigerians to shun quacks, prioritise oral health

SANGO-OTA (OGUN)

The President of the Nigerian Association of Orthodontists (NAO), Idia Ize-Iyamu, has called on Nigerians to prioritise professional dental care and avoid unqualified practitioners in order to maintain healthy smiles and proper oral health.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark this year's World Orthodontic Health Day, Prof. Ize-Iyamu stressed the importance of seeking expert orthodontic treatment, warning that patronising quacks could result in avoidable dental complications.

The NAO President, who doubles as Chief Medical Director of University of Benin Teaching Hospital, said or-

thodontists play a critical role in helping individuals achieve improved dental alignment, greater self-confidence, and enhanced personality through corrective treatment.

She urged Nigerians to embrace regular dental check-ups as part of preventive healthcare, noting that early professional intervention remained key to maintaining oral health and correcting dental irregularities.

Highlighting the significance of the annual observance, Prof. Ize-Iyamu explained that World Orthodontic Health Day serves as a global platform for orthodontists, patients, and the public to promote awareness on the importance of proper teeth alignment and overall oral wellbeing.

NEWS

NDC shuts presidential form sale, extends deadline for other aspirants

ABUJA

The Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) has officially closed the sale of Expression of Interest Forms for aspirants seeking to contest the presidency under the party's platform ahead of the 2027 general elections, while extending the deadline for other elective offices.

The party announced that

aspirants for State Houses of Assembly, House of Representatives, Senate and Governorship positions would now have until May 24, 2026, to obtain their Expression of Interest Forms, extending the earlier deadline of May 17.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued on Monday in Abuja by the party's National Secretary, Mr. Ikenna Enekweizu.

According to the statement, screening of aspirants who have purchased and completed their Expression of Inter-

est Forms will commence on Tuesday and end on May 26, as the party moves to conclude its pre-election preparations.

The NDC further revealed that the collection and submission of Nomination Forms for aspirants who successfully pass the screening process would begin on Wednesday and close on May 26.

The party stressed that there would be no further extension

beyond the stipulated deadline, warning aspirants to adhere strictly to the guidelines and timetable provided.

It directed all aspirants to appear for screening and pre-qualification interviews at designated venues nationwide with relevant documents, including educational certificates, birth certificates or declarations of age, passport photographs, voter's cards,

NDC membership cards and curriculum vitae.

According to the statement, all submitted documents must be presented in six copies.

The party explained that the screening process would be guided by factors such as the wishes of the electorate, local realities, aspirants' competence and capacity, as well as integrity and character.

The NDC also said its

Screening Committee would take into account the party's affirmative action policy aimed at promoting the inclusion of women, youths and persons living with disabilities.

While encouraging internal consensus among party members, the party emphasised that only aspirants who scale through the screening exercise would be eligible to purchase Nomination Forms.

Senate condemns abduction of 87 pupils, pushes for State Police

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Nigerian Senate has condemned the abduction of 87 students and teachers in separate attacks on schools in Borno and Oyo states, describing the incidents as a dangerous assault on the future of the country and renewing calls for the establishment of state police.

Leader of the Senate, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, said the recurring attacks further underscored the urgency of decentralising Nigeria's policing system to strengthen national security.

In a statement issued on Sunday by the Directorate of Media and Public Affairs in his office, Bamidele described the school abductions as unacceptable despite more than \$30 million reportedly raised globally in 2014 to improve school security across Nigeria.

The latest attacks involved the abduction of 45 students and teachers by suspected gunmen from Baptist Nursery and Primary School, Community Grammar School and L.A Primary School in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State.

In a similar attack, suspected Boko Haram insurgents reportedly invaded Mussa Primary and Junior Secondary School in Askira/Uba Local Government Area of Borno State and abducted 42 students.

Bamidele described the incidents as a "tragic national concern" capable of worsen-

ing Nigeria's already alarming out-of-school children crisis and undermining long-term national development.

"We cannot and must not allow it to continue. At the National Assembly, we will rise against this trend and put an end to it through the instrumentality of legislation," he said.

He disclosed that the 10th National Assembly had reached an advanced stage in the amendment of the 1999 Constitution to pave the way for the creation of state police.

According to him, once the constitutional amendment process is concluded, the proposal would be transmitted to state Houses of Assembly for ratification by at least two-thirds of the states.

The Senate leader appealed to governors and state lawmakers to treat the issue as one of national survival rather than partisan or ethnic politics.

He also urged federal and state governments to fully implement the Safe School Initiative as an immediate response to insecurity in schools and the rising number of out-of-school children, currently estimated at 18.3 million.

Bamidele added that the National Assembly would resume plenary on June 2 to conclude pending legislative measures aimed at addressing insecurity, including proposed amendments to the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022, to strengthen accountability and reinforce the justice system against terrorism and violent crimes.

**INVESTITURE OF NEWLY CIBN PRESIDENT:**

L-R: Newly elected President, Council for Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Dr Dele Alabi; the Ooni of Ife, His Imperial Majesty, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi; Chairman, Keystone Bank Limited, Lady Ada Chukwudozie and immediate past President of CIBN, Prof. Pius Olanrewaju, during the investiture of the newly elected CIBN President/24th Chairman of Council, in Lagos

Labour Party disowns Abure's nomination forms, warns aspirants against 'Worthless papers'

ABUJA

The Labour Party (LP) has distanced itself from nomination forms allegedly being issued by its former National Chairman, Julius Abure, warning party members and political aspirants against dealing with him.

The party described the forms as "worthless papers" allegedly being circulated by unauthorised persons, insisting that only documents issued through its National Secretariat in Utako, Abuja, are valid for the 2027 general elections.

The warning came amid growing controversy over social media images purportedly showing Abure presenting nomination forms to individuals in Abia State.

In a statement issued in Abuja on Sunday, the party's National Publicity Secretary, Ken Asogwa, said the leadership had received numerous enquiries from concerned members regarding the authenticity of the forms.

Asogwa reaffirmed that Senator Nenadi Usman remained the authentic National Chairman of the Labour Party and

accused Abure of unlawfully parading himself in the position.

"Any so-called Labour Party nomination form obtained from Julius Abure or any other unauthorised source is nothing but worthless paper being peddled by political fraudsters seeking to deceive unsuspecting persons," he stated.

The party spokesman urged the public and intending aspirants to remain vigilant and avoid dealings with individuals allegedly posing as party officials.

He also questioned why the

purported sale of nomination forms by Abure appeared concentrated in Abia State, insisting that Governor Alex Otti, whom he described as the party's national leader, would not succumb to political intimidation or pressure.

Asogwa further accused Abure of criminal impersonation, warning that such actions carry serious legal implications.

The development marks a fresh twist in the internal leadership crisis rocking the Labour Party ahead of the 2027 elections.

NMA President seeks better welfare, security to halt Doctors exodus

IDAHOSA MUSA

BENIN CITY

The newly elected National President of the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Professor Afekhide Omoti, has called for improved welfare, enhanced security and better working conditions for medical practitioners as part of urgent measures to stem the growing wave of brain drain in Nigeria's health sector.

Omoti made the call on Thursday shortly after arriving

at the Benin Airport, where he was received by members and leaders of the NMA Edo State Branch, the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), the Medical and Dental Consultants' Association of Nigeria (MDCAN), and other affiliate bodies.

Addressing journalists, the NMA president pledged that the welfare, dignity and professional well-being of medical doctors would remain a major focus of his administration.

He assured that efforts would be intensified to create

a conducive work environment for healthcare professionals nationwide.

"We will do everything in our power to restore the dignity of medical doctors and improve their welfare. Also, security and a conducive work environment for medical practitioners and indeed all health workers will be a priority," he said.

Omoti expressed concern over the increasing migration of young medical professionals abroad, warning that the trend posed a serious threat to Nige-

ria's already strained healthcare system.

According to him, many young doctors now complete their education only to prepare for foreign examinations and leave the country in search of better opportunities.

"Our young ones cannot finish school and go abroad because at the moment, that's all they do. They write foreign examinations and take off. We want to make sure that kind of thing stops," he said.

He warned that Nigeria risks a healthcare crisis if urgent in-

terventions are not made to retain medical personnel.

"We cannot continue to train doctors for the rest of the world. We have to train doctors for Nigeria or else very soon, we will have nobody to look after us. The situation is very bad at the moment and it needs urgent attention. We must act now," Omoti added.

On workers' welfare, he assured doctors across all cadres and locations of stronger advocacy for improved welfare packages, rights and privileges.

"We will advocate for the

welfare, rights and privileges of doctors irrespective of their levels, cadre or location. We will also strive to improve the healthcare system in Nigeria for the benefit of all Nigerians," he stated.

Earlier, Edo State Chairman of the NMA, Dr. Eustace Oseghale, described Omoti's emergence as National President as a moment of pride for the state chapter, noting that it was a privilege for the Edo branch to produce the national leader during his tenure.

Army aviation playing decisive role in operations —COAS

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Wai-di Shaibu, says Nigerian Army Aviation is now playing

a decisive role in ongoing operations, significantly enhancing combat effectiveness across theatres.

Shaibu said this on Monday in Abuja, at the opening of

the Chief of Army Staff First Bi-Annual Conference 2026.

He described the growing integration of air assets into ground operations as a major force multiplier, improving

troop mobility, precision strikes and rapid response capabilities.

According to him, a key milestone was recently achieved in the North-East theatre where Nigerian Army aviation assets

successfully supported the insertion and extraction of troops in difficult terrains, including the Tungutu Triangle.

“This marks a major operational breakthrough in our efforts to dominate previously inaccessible areas and disrupt terrorist activities with greater speed and precision.”

The COAS noted that the Army had also strengthened its operational posture through sustained deployments, reconfiguration of formations and establishment of new units in critical areas.

He said the evolving security environment required a more agile, technology-driven and intelligence-led force, capable of responding effectively to asymmetric threats across the country.

Shaibu reiterated the Army’s commitment to deepening joint and inter-agency collaboration, as well as leveraging strategic partnerships to en-

hance operational outcomes.

He commended officers and soldiers for their resilience and professionalism, while urging commanders to remain adaptive and mission-focused in tackling emerging security challenges.

In his opening remarks, the Chief of Policy and Plans (Army), Maj.-Gen. Bamidele Alabi, said the conference was aimed at reviewing ongoing operations, assessing challenges and developing practical strategies to improve effectiveness.

Alabi urged participants to be solution-oriented in their deliberations with a view to further reposition the Nigerian Army in line with its constitutional responsibilities.

The conference brought together senior officers, commanders and heads of formations and institutions to chart the army’s operational direction for the rest of the year.



MASTER PLAN CONSULTATIVE FORUM:

L-R: Representative of the Director-General, National Orientation Agency, Mr Robinson Okeson; First Lady of Designate Akwa Ibom State, Helen Eno Obaseke; Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Said Ahmad and Chairman of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), retired Brig.-Gen. Mohammed Marwa, during the National Drug Control Master Plan Consultative Forum in Abuja on Monday.

\$500m research fund shows Nigeria’s readiness for knowledge economy —Onwualu

ABUJA

Adon, Prof. Peter Onwualu, has said that the Federal Government’s approval of 500 million dollars National Research and Innovation Fund (NRIF) demonstrates Nigeria’s readiness to position science, technology and innovation at the centre of national development.

Onwualu, President, African University of Science and Technology (AUST), said this while speaking on the sidelines of the workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and the Renewed Hope Agenda in Abuja on Monday.

He said the fund, if well managed, would propel the future of Nigeria’s development and the collective aspiration to build a

resilient, knowledge-driven and innovation-led economy.

He expressed appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for what he described as visionary leadership through the recent announcement of the establishment of the research fund.

“This bold and historic commitment sends a strong signal that Nigeria is prepared to place research, innovation, science and technology at the centre of national development and economic transformation.

“It is a landmark intervention that has the potential to reposition Nigeria as a leading knowledge economy in Africa,” he said.

Onwualu said that nations making sustained economic progress globally were deliberately investing in science, tech-

nology, research, innovation and human capital development.

The don listed areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy, Fin-Tech, advanced manufacturing, 3D printing, robotics, drones, digital economy, space science and agricultural technology as key drivers of competitiveness and national growth.

According to him, Nigeria possesses enormous intellectual capital, a vibrant youthful population, dynamic entrepreneurs and a rapidly expanding innovation ecosystem.

He, however, identified inadequate, fragmented and epileptic funding for research and innovation as one of the major constraints confronting Nigeria’s national innovation system.

“Many researchers and in-

novators have struggled to translate ideas, prototypes and research outputs into scalable solutions,” he said.

The AUST president commended the Federal Government for taking deliberate steps towards the operationalisation of the National Research Innovation Fund (NRIF).

He said that ongoing efforts, including the project on strengthening research funding agencies in West Africa under the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI), were aimed at building capacity for the effective implementation of the NRIF.

According to him, the project supported similar activities in six West Africa, noting that Nigeria is the only country among them yet to have an operational NRIF.

Stigma, funding gaps undermine Nigeria’s fight against HIV —Physician

IBADAN

Stigma and weak domestic funding are doing more to undermine Nigeria’s HIV response than any lack of medical tools, a public health physician has said.

Dr Victor Nelson, a Resident Doctor in Community Medicine at University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, made the assertion in an interview with newsmen in commemoration of World AIDS Vaccine Day on Monday.

The day is celebrated on May 18, annually, to highlight the urgent, ongoing need for a safe and effective vaccine to

prevent HIV/AIDS.

Nelson said new infections were rising fastest in the South-South region, particularly in the states of Akwa Ibom and Rivers.

He added that Anambra in the South-East had also been flagged, while Benue State remained one of the most heavily affected overall.

“These reports are concerning, but much of the data still requires validation before firm conclusions can be drawn,” Nelson said.

He said while preventive efforts had improved through local innovation and international support, worsening insecurity was creating new

pockets of vulnerability.

The community physician emphasised that the rise in internally displaced persons had disproportionately affected women, children, and adolescents in IDP camps, refugee settlements, and urban slums.

“In these settings, these vulnerable groups face heightened risks of transactional sex and sexual violence for survival.

“Greater targeted interventions are urgently needed,” he said.

Nelson’s most urgent warning centred on stigma.

While working as a Community Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART) Consultant in An-

ambra, he said parents often rejected adolescent daughters diagnosed with HIV, assuming promiscuity even when the infection resulted from rape.

“Some adolescents died from starvation after being rejected by their families, while others suffered severe mental health crises.

“Although the organisation had protection mechanisms in place, we couldn’t always intervene in all cases,” he said.

According to him, if an HIV vaccine becomes available, religious and cultural resistance will be the biggest obstacle to uptake, ahead of cost and logistics.

72 displaced families benefit from Afri-mission’s housing programme

ABUJA

No fewer than 72 displaced families in Abuja have benefited from a humanitarian housing intervention aimed at providing shelter and restoring dignity to victims of insurgency, banditry and communal crises.

The beneficiaries received the accommodation support during the official presentation ceremony of Afri-mission’s Rental Housing Support Programme (RHSP) for Displaced Christians on Monday.

The President of Afri-mission and Evangelism Network (AMEN), Oscar Amaechina, said the project was inspired by the need to assist vulnerable persons living in uncompleted buildings and informal settlements across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The initiative was facilitated by AMEN, with support from the World Outreach Ministries International (WOMI) and the Ignited Church.

Amaechina explained that many displaced persons were outside official Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, making them difficult to identify and assist.

He said the organisation conducted a needs assessment survey across communities in Abuja to locate displaced families lacking proper shelter.

“I was inspired by the Holy Spirit to check out on those who are living in uncompleted buildings, with special attention to those who are displaced from their original homes due to insurgency, terrorism, and banditry in Nigeria.

“And we decided to have a need assessment survey where we try as much as possible to go into some places in Abuja here, because unfortunately most of them are not in IDP

camps, and nobody will identify them.

“So it took a lot of work before we can get in touch with these people. And when I was able to get a good number of them, we decided by administering food items to them so that they can eat food,” he said.

According to him, the intervention, which cost between N12 million and N13 million, covered rent payments ranging from one to two years for the beneficiaries.

“I decided to communicate this vision to a dear friend of ours who lives in Lavona, Georgia.

“She’s a pastor (Jennifer Faircloth) and the wife of my late mentor in the person of Pastor Benjamin Faircloth. And she bought into the idea and key into it, and they really helped us immensely to see that we are able to secure accommodation for 72 families.

“And today is the ceremony, and we have already handed some of the apartments to some of them, and the remaining ones we do it just this week.”

He added that the beneficiaries were selected from an existing database of over 3,000 vulnerable persons, including women and children affected by insecurity.

Amaechina stressed that the programme was non-religious, noting that both Christians and Muslims benefited from the initiative.

“We meet those going through difficulties and challenges, especially those who are displaced by a suggestion of terrorism, whether you are a Christian or Muslim or a pagan, whatever it is, it’s not about religion this time around.

“It’s about humanity. We usually help them, and that is what we did this time around,” he said.

NEWS

Oyo students' abduction: Makinde confirms teacher's killing, arrest of 6 suspects

IBADAN

Governor Seyi Makinde has confirmed the killing of one of the teachers and the arrest of six suspects related to the kidnapping incident at Ahoro-Esinele community, Oyo State.

Makinde said this in a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media, Dr Suleimon Olanrewaju, in Ibadan on Monday.

He expressed his condolences to the victim's family and assured his government would explore both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to rescue others in the kidnapers' den.

He equally sympathised with the family members of

the tactical team of soldiers, Amotekun Corps and local vigilantes, who lost their lives in the rescue operation.

According to him, the operatives lost their lives when they ran into Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), planted by the abductors.

He stated that the wounded security personnel were responding positively to treatment and that the government would spare no cost in taking care of them.

He appealed to the victims' relatives, religious bodies and other interested parties to exercise patience, promising that the government will rescue and reunite the victims with their families.

"So, please, there may not be

quick fixes, but we will continue to endeavour to push ourselves to the limit to resolve this quickly.

"What we know right now is that seven teachers in all were abducted. And, unfortunately, we got a video this morning that one of the teachers, I understand, the mathematics teacher, was killed by the terrorists," he stated.

Makinde, however, said

the government has recorded some successes with the operation, with some individuals already arrested in connection with the situation.

"Well, from the information available from the Commissioner of Police, about six individuals have been arrested within the locality.

"Some of them, we believe, are perhaps informants or peo-

ple running logistics for the terrorists.

"Also, three individuals of interest have been arrested by another security outfit within the state," he said.

The governor acknowledged the need to engage neighbouring states to curb the influx of terrorists into Oyo State.

"We must appreciate the fact that with the pressure on the

terrorists and the bandits in the North-West and the North-East, they will keep moving southwards.

"So, we are talking.

"The Governor of Kwara has spoken to me, but the problem that we have is when you have pressure in one place, we must be prepared on this side too, also, either repel or neutralise terrorists fleeing the pressure point," the governor added.

Group urges Uzodinma to investigate alleged killings in Imo community

ENUGU

The Ndigbo Unity Forum (NUF), a socio-cultural organisation has urged Gov. Hope Uzodinma of Imo, to set up a judicial panel of enquiry to investigate the alleged invasion and killings in Ezio-bodo and surrounding communities, Owerri West Local Government Area.

The Chairman of NUF, Chief Augustine Chukwudum, made the call while speaking with newsmen in Enugu.

The socio-political group demanded that perpetrators of the violence be brought to book.

It would be recalled that on

Wednesday, some gunmen invaded and shot residents in Ezio-bodo and surrounding communities, which is host to the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, in Owerri West Local Government Area.

"The attack brought fear to the entire residents of the state. Authorities and communities in Imo must not handle this matter with kid gloves.

"NUF calls on all communities in South-East to have formidable vigilante groups to prevent criminals from operating in the communities," he said.

The NUF also called on the Federal Government to wade into the matter.

Bishop seeks stronger press freedom to fight digital manipulation

ABUJA

The Catholic Bishop of Katsina, Most Rev. Gerald Musa, has called for stronger press freedom and ethical media frameworks to combat digital manipulation, artificial intelligence threats, and misinformation.

Musa made the call in an interview with our correspondent in Abuja, during the 2026 World Communications Day celebration.

The 2026 World Day of Social Communications was celebrated globally on Sunday, which coincided with the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.

He said modern communication systems are increasingly influenced by algorithm-driven content that can subtly distort human judgment and reduce people's ability to think critically.

"We are in a digital world and we are influenced in different ways by digital technology, especially what we read from our phones, from our digital devices and many others,"

"The Pope calls on us that in

the usage of digital technology, we must recognise the dignity of the human face, the dignity of the human voice, and the voice of truth is a face that reflects the image of God," he said.

Musa cautioned that algorithm-driven media environments risk shaping what people see, believe and share, often without accountability.

"We must not allow algorithms to take away our humanity."

He also raised concern about the vulnerability of young people to misinformation and digital influence, noting that many struggle to distinguish between reality and falsehood online.

"Young people are impressionable, they find it difficult to differentiate between fantasy and reality," he said.

The bishop described digital communication as a "double-edged sword," stressing that while it can educate and inform, it can also be used to spread harm and manipulate society.

"The media is a double-edged sword... when misused, it can lead to things that may not be good for society."

**2026 CORRESPONDENTS' WEEK:**

L-R: Deputy National President (NUJ), South-South, Mr Opaka Dokubo; Chairman, Correspondents' Chapel of NUJ, Rivers State, Mr Amaechi Okonkwo; Keynote Speaker and Executive Director, Health of Mother Earth (HOME), Mr Nnimmo Bassey, and Chairman of the Occasion, Eze Igbu Upata 111 of Upata kingdom, Ahoada East Local Government area of Rivers State, King Felix Otuwarikepo, during the 2026 Correspondents' Week in Port Harcourt on Monday

Alleged national security breach: Court admits El-Rufai to N100m bail

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Monday admitted former Governor Nasir El-Rufai to a N100 million bail with one surety in like sum in the ongoing trial bordering on alleged breach of national security.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik granted the former governor a bail after the Department of State Services (DSS)'s lawyer, Oluwole Aladedoye, SAN, did not oppose the bail application filed by Oluwole Iyamu, SAN.

Justice Abdulmalik, in the ruling, ordered that the surety, who must reside in either

Maitama or Asokoro Districts of Abuja, must deposit the original Certificate of Occupancy of the landed property at the court registry.

The judge said the surety should be a federal civil servant not below Grade Level 17 and must provide evidence of salary payments for at least three months.

She ordered that the evidence must be authenticated by a letter from the manager of the bank within the jurisdiction of the court.

She further ordered the surety to depose to an affidavit of means, enter into a bail bond and submit a recent passport

photograph to the court registry.

Justice Abdulmalik equally ordered El-Rufai to deposit all his valid international passports with the court registrar.

She directed that a verification letter from the surety's immediate department be submitted, alongside a tax clearance certificate covering the last six months.

The judge further ordered the ex-governor to report to the headquarters of the DSS every last Friday of the month by 10 a.m. to sign an attendance register pending the determination of the case.

She warned that failure to comply would lead to an automatic revocation of the bail.

The judge, who directed El-Rufai to submit a letter of at-

testation from the chairman of the Kaduna Traditional Council, ordered an accelerated trial and shifted the commencement of trial to pm today.

The DSS had, in the further amended charge marked: FHC/ABJ/99/2026, preferred a five counts against the former governor.

El-Rufai, who was arraigned on April 23 for allegedly intercepting the phone conversations of the telephone line of the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, pleaded not guilty to the counts

The judge ordered that the defendant, who was brought from the custody of ICPC in relation to a separate case, be remanded in the custody of the DSS, pending the ruling on his bail application.

UNICEF, UniCal collaborate to end open defecation on campus

CALABAR

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the University of Calabar (UniCal) has inaugurated a campus-wide campaign to end open defecation.

The inauguration was preceded by a rally across the UniCal campus in Calabar on Monday.

The campaign led by students and backed by UNICEF's Clean Campus Programme, aims to change behavior and institutionalise open defeca-

tion-free standards at UniCal.

The Dean of Students Affairs of the institution, Prof. Offiong Mensah, addressing students during the rally, cited health risks and poor sanitation practices as the reason for the campaign.

Mensah noted that open defecation had become a trending practice on campus in spite of its health hazards.

"It affects the health of students and the environment they live in. The university does not find this a healthy practice.

"That is why we want to raise

awareness and let them know the dangers," he said.

He acknowledged that some students resort to open defecation due to poor toilet facilities, and in some cases, background habits.

"The current Vice Chancellor has begun replacing and repairing toilets across campus. The director of works has been asked to evacuate all septic tanks that are filled and unblock the toilets. The work is ongoing.

"The university is putting every effort in place to ensure toilets are accessible and open defe-

cation is put to an end," he added.

UNICEF Young People Action Team member, Mr Dumbari Life, said the programme would be student-driven, with advocacy and a challenge component to sustain engagement.

"This is just the first phase where we sensitise students. Moving forward, students will engage in a challenge.

"We will evaluate how many toilets are available and functioning, and how many UNICEF can support so students don't have to go to the bush or defecate in the lawn," he said.

Tinubu's economic reforms guiding Nigeria to sustainable growth, productivity —Yilwatda

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms guiding Nigeria to the path of sustainable growth, productivity and national renewal through President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms.

Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, gave the assurance in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media and Information Strategy, Mr Abimbola Tooki in Abuja.

Yilwatda said the emerging signs of national recovery in-

clude: international and trade confidence, sectoral growth and investments, foreign reserves and macroeconomic stability and agricultural Push.

Yilwatda emphasised that these reforms are not quick-fix policies but strategic, long-term overhauls designed to rebuild Nigeria's economy.

He explained that the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Tinubu was never designed as a short-term populist project, but as a bold and strategic intervention.

He added that it was aimed at

correcting decades of structural distortions that weakened national productivity, discouraged investments and constrained economic competitiveness.

"Great nations are not built on easy choices or temporary comforts, but on courageous decisions that secure the future of generations yet unborn.

"The reforms being implemented today are laying the foundation for a more stable, productive and prosperous Nigeria," the APC national chairman said.

He acknowledged the econom-

ic pains currently being experienced by many Nigerians, especially in the areas of inflationary pressure and cost of living.

He maintained that the Federal Government had continued to respond to the pains through targeted interventions, infrastructure investments, support for local industries and strategic expansion of critical sectors of the economy.

Yilwatda noted that several economic indicators were already reflecting growing investor confidence and improving commercial activities across the country.

He cited the latest maritime sector performance report which revealed that Nigerian ports handled 1,092 ocean-going vessels in the first quarter of 2026.

He described the development as a strong sign of increasing trade activities, expanding export operations and renewed confidence in the Nigerian economy.

According to him, the development demonstrates that the administration's investments in port infrastructure modernisation, logistics improvement, transport connectivity and export expansion policies are beginning to stimulate productive economic activities nationwide.

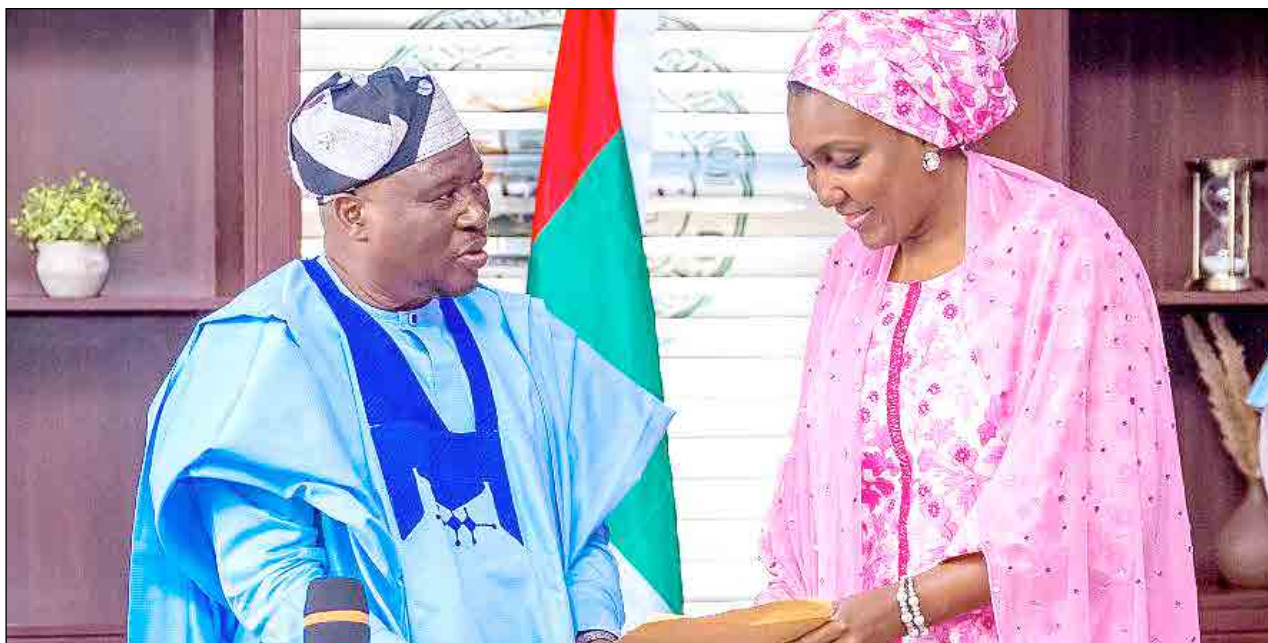
"The handling of over 1,092

ocean-going vessels within the first quarter of the year is not an isolated statistic.

"It reflects increasing commercial confidence, stronger maritime operations, rising export activities and renewed international economic engagement with Nigeria.

"This is a direct outcome of strategic reforms and infrastructure investments being undertaken by the Federal Government," he said.

Yilwatda cited the recent improvement in Nigeria's crude oil production, which had reached about 99.2 per cent of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) production quota.

**UMAR VISITS FINTIRI:**

Governor Umar Fintiri of Adamawa State (L), with the Director-General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mrs Zubaida Umar, during the visit of Umar to the Governor as part of activities to mark the 2026 National Preparedness and Response Campaign on Flood Disaster and Related Hazards in Yola.

Military airstrikes kill 20 ISIS/ISWAP terrorists in Borno —DHQ

ABUJA

The Defence Headquarters says coordinated airstrikes in the Metele general area of Borno have killed more than 20 ISIS/ISWAP fighters in continued counter-terrorism operations in the North-East.

The DHQ in collaboration with the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), said the strikes were executed following credible intelligence on the movement and convergence of terrorist elements in the area.

This was contained in a statement on Monday in Abuja, by the Director of Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Samaila Uba.

Uba said that the operations formed part of sustained efforts to dismantle terrorist networks and deny them safe havens in the country.

He also said the latest strikes

followed earlier operations that led to the neutralisation of a senior ISIS commander, Abu-Bilal al-Minuki.

According to him, the ongoing offensive is aimed at degrading terrorist capabilities, disrupting their operations, and maintaining pressure on insurgent groups across the North-East theatre.

"The Armed Forces of Nigeria will continue to aggressively defend the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the nation."

He added that troops would relentlessly pursue all terrorist elements threatening communities, stressing that there would be "no safe haven for terrorists anywhere within Nigeria."

He reaffirmed the military's commitment to sustained air and ground operations in collaboration with international partners to restore lasting peace in affected regions.

Imoke, Ahmed lead ADC presidential primary c'ttees

ABUJA

The African Democratic Congress (ADC), has appointed former Cross River and Kwara governors, Liyel Imoke and Abdulfatah Ahmed, to lead its presidential primary committees.

This was contained in a statement on Monday in Abuja by the National Publicity Secretary of the party, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi.

Abdullahi said that Imoke

would chair the Presidential Screening Committee, while Ahmed would head the Presidential Election Committee.

Other members of the Presidential Screening Committee include Cyril Maduabum, Secretary, Alhaji Lawal Batagarawa, Prof. Bode Ayorinde, Nnena Elen-du-Ukeje, Prof. David Salifu, and retired Col. Abubakar Ciroma.

The Presidential Election Committee has Prof. Yisa Gana as Secretary, alongside retired Maj.-Gen. Adamu Jalingo, Dr

Auwalu Anwar, Chief Emenike Ikechi, Dr Macaulay Iyare, Tajudeen Bakare, and others.

The party also constituted a Presidential Appeal Committee to be chaired by Dr Suleiman Usman, SAN, with Mr Ken Imasuagbon as Secretary, while Mr Dare Okerade serves as member.

For the governorship primaries, the party constituted two screening panels, with the first panel to be chaired by Shai-bu Aruwa, SAN, while Femi Olawuyi, Esq, serves as Secretary.

Other members include Lauretta Onochie, Dr Vivian Ugochukwu, Akilu Indabawa, Ibrahim Wali, and Prof. Rabi Bello as members of the panel.

The second Governorship Screening Panel is to be chaired by Mrs Justina Abanida, with Chille Igbawua as Secretary and other designated members.

The members include Gerard Irona, Sen. Yisa Braimoh, Hassan Ibrahim, Joseph Ene-mali, and retired Navy Capt. Aliyu Ngolmo.

NDC flays rising terror financing, calls for stronger inter-agency synergy

ABUJA

The National Defence College (NDC) has said that Nigeria and the wider West African region must urgently strengthen institutional collaboration to counter the growing sophistication of terrorism financing networks.

The Commandant of the NDC, Rear Adm. Abdullahi Ahmed, gave the charge on Monday in Abuja, at the opening of the Countering the Financing of Terrorism and Regional Security Course (Operational Level two).

Ahmed represented by the Director of Academic Research and Analytical Support, Commodore Aliyu Umaru, said the course was designed to bridge institutional divides and enhanced synergy among security, intelligence and regulatory agencies.

He said the programme builds on the Operational Level one course conducted in 2025, which helped validate curriculum frameworks and refined training methodologies.

According to him, terrorism financing in the region has evolved through complex licit

and illicit channels, including cyber-enabled transactions, smuggling networks, informal cash systems and transnational criminal enterprises.

He cited regional assessments indicating that extremist groups across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin sustained operations through kidnapping for ransom, illegal taxation, arms trafficking, illicit mining and cattle rustling.

"These realities underscore the urgent need for stronger institutional coordination, intelligence sharing and operational cooperation to dis-

mantle the financial lifelines of terrorism," he said.

Ahmed stressed that countering terrorism financing could no longer be addressed solely through a "Whole of Government" approach, but required a broader "Whole of Society" framework involving academia, private sector actors and civil society.

He identified key stakeholders in the effort to include the Armed Forces, intelligence agencies, law enforcement bodies, regulatory institutions, MDAs, and select private sector organisations.

\$30m boost targets 2.5m conflict-affected children in Nigeria, Kenya

ABUJA

The LEGO Foundation and Co-Impact have launched a 30-million-dollar education partnership to improve learning and wellbeing for 2.5 million children affected by conflict and crises in Nigeria and Kenya.

This was contained in statement made available to reporters on Monday in Abuja.

The statement was signed by Ms Öykü Kurun, a strategic communications executive at Thorndon Partners.

Kurun said that the five-year initiative would focus on strengthening public education systems by supporting locally rooted and refugee-led organisations working in fragile and crisis-affected communities.

According to the partners, the programme is designed to move beyond short-term humanitarian interventions by embedding sustainable, locally driven solutions into national education systems.

In a joint statement, they

noted that more than one in six children globally were affected by conflict or crisis, stressing the need for long-term investments that addressed both learning outcomes and child wellbeing.

Nigeria and Kenya were selected based on the scale of need and government commitment to education reform in crisis settings.

"In Nigeria, an estimated 17.8 million children are out of school, with nearly half affected by conflict, making it one of the largest education crises in Africa," they said.

The partners noted ongoing government efforts such as the Safe Schools Initiative and the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools as key steps toward improving access and protection for learners.

They said in Kenya, more than 250,000 refugee children remained outside the national education system, while climate-related shocks had displaced an additional two million children from school.

NEWS

RTEAN official warns against reckless driving, launches safety book

LAGOS

Nurudeen Eniafe, Zonal Chairman of Ojo Zone 4, Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), has warned against reckless driving, particularly on the highways.

He urged members of the association and other motorists to urgently desist from dangerous driving habits that endanger lives and public safety across the country.

Eniafe gave the warning during the public presentation of his book, 'Drivers' Reckless Behaviour on Highway,' at the Femi Gbajabiamila Hall of Lagos State University (LASU) in Ojo.

The ceremony attracted transport stakeholders, academics, and road safety officials.

He said reckless driving remained a major contributor to avoidable road crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Nigerian roads.

"Majority of our drivers are very reckless, and the price of reckless driving is not friendly," he said.

Eniafe explained that the consequences of crashes go beyond victims, affecting entire families and communities in painful and lasting ways.

He noted that when bread-

winners die in crashes, families often face economic hardship and emotional instability.

"When a father dies in an accident, the wife becomes vulnerable and the children may be forced out of school," he said.

He added that some affected children eventually drift into crime and other social vices due to lack of support and guidance.

Eniafe said the inspiration for the book came from years of experience in the transport sector and academic exposure in transport planning.

He explained that his work combines field observations with theoretical knowledge gained during his Master's degree and ongoing PhD research.

"We see accidents every day as transport operators. Many lives, including future leaders, are cut short because drivers do not respect the road," he said.

He said the publication was designed to promote defensive driving, discipline, and patience among motorists across all categories of road users.

Eniafe urged drivers to always prioritise the safety of passengers and the wellbeing of their families while driving on highways.

"You should think of your wife and children at home and drive in a way that will protect

life and property," he said.

He called for road safety education to be introduced into school curricula at all levels across the country.

Eniafe also recommended that the book be adopted as

a training manual in driving schools nationwide.

He said many drivers lack basic understanding of road signs, traffic rules, and driving ethics, worsening crash rates.

The RTEAN leader advised passengers to remain vigilant and assess vehicles and driver behaviour before boarding commercial transport.

"Passengers should ensure that vehicles are roadworthy and avoid drivers who appear intoxicated or unstable," he said.

According to him, RTEAN is already conducting regular training for drivers in collaboration with LASU School of Transport.

NAN also reports that the association is also working

with FRSC, LASTMA, and the Ministry of Transportation to promote road safety awareness.

Eniafe said the book would serve as a practical guide for transport operators, motorists, students, and all road users nationwide.

"Anybody can drive, but the most important thing is to drive safely," he said.

**AMB. DAMBAZAU VISITS NAN HEADQUARTERS:**

Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali M Ali (R), presenting a souvenir to the Nigerian Ambassador to China, retired Lt.-Gen. Abdulrahman Dambazau, during the visit of the Ambassador to NAN Headquarters in Abuja on Monday.

NIA, NAICOM mourn ex-president of NCRIB

LAGOS

The Nigerian Insurers Association (NIA) and National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) have expressed deep sorrow over the death of Mr Rotimi Edu.

In separate condolence messages on Monday, both bodies described Edu as a visionary leader and pillar of the insurance industry whose contributions remain indelible.

Edu was the 21st president of the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB).

The NIA Chairman, Mr Kunle Ahmed, said the association received news of Edu's passing with profound shock and sadness.

The deceased was described as an exceptional leader, astute legal practitioner and committed insurance professional who devoted decades to industry advancement.

According to him, Edu during his tenure as NCRIB 21st president championed initiatives strengthening collaboration between insurers and brokers, promoting industry unity.

"His passing leaves a massive vacuum that will be deeply felt across the entire financial services sector," he said.

Ahmed noted that Edu distinguished himself through professionalism, ethical conduct

and selfless service to society.

Edu as member of National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) brought strategic insight and advocated reforms aligned with modern economic realities.

NIA chairman extended condolences to NCRIB leadership, family, colleagues and friends of the deceased.

"While the industry mourns a monumental loss, we take solace in enduring legacy of integrity, leadership and institutional progress he left behind," Ahmed said.

Also mourning, NAICOM Commissioner for Insurance and CEO, Mr Olusegun Omoshin, described Edu as a towering figure in insurance broking profession.

He said Edu left an indelible mark on insurance through brilliance, foresight and unwavering dedication to advancement of practice in Nigeria.

He said legacy of integrity, courage and progressive leadership would continue to inspire future generations of insurance practitioners.

He described Edu as a man of uncommon intellect and boundless energy, a cauldron of ideas and passionate reform advocate.

"Even in face of personal health challenges, his devotion to council and insurance industry remained steadfast," he said.

APC primaries: 2 Reps members, Nasarawa Assembly speaker lose HoR ticket

LAFIA

Two serving members of the House of Representatives from Nasarawa State, and speaker of the State House of Assembly have lost the All Progressives Congress (APC) House of Representatives tickets for the 2027 general elections.

The affected lawmakers included Mohammed Abdulmumini-Ari, representing Nasarawa/Toto Federal Con-

stituency, Jeremiah Umaru, representing Akwanga/Nasarawa-Eggon/Wamba Federal Constituency, and Dr Danladi Jatau, speaker of the State Assembly.

Mr Musa Shuaibu-Guri, Chairman of the APC House of Representatives Primary Election Committee in the state, announced the results on Sunday in Lafia.

Shuaibu-Guri said the committee successfully conducted the primaries in four of the five federal constituencies in the state.

He said the exercise was peaceful across Nasarawa/Toto, Keffi/Kokona/Karu, Lafia/Obi and Akwanga/Nasarawa-Eggon/Wamba federal constituencies, with party officials and security personnel supervising the process.

According to him, the results reflected the wishes of party members and demonstrated the APC's commitment to internal democracy ahead of the 2027 elections.

"After a thorough collation

and verification process, we are pleased to announce that the primaries in four constituencies were concluded successfully and without major incidents," he said.

Shuaibu-Guri, however, said the result for Awe/Doma/Keana Federal Constituency was still being awaited due to difficult terrain and logistical challenges.

He expressed optimism that the outstanding result would be received and announced in due course.

APM governorship candidate promises 4th Mainland Bridge, security, others

LAGOS

The Allied Peoples Movement (APM) governorship candidate in Lagos State, Prince Laja Adeoye, has pledged to build the 4th Mainland Bridge and establish Amotekun Corps to fight insecurity if elected in 2027.

Adeoye made the pledge while unveiling his "RESET LAGOS Agenda 2027" tagged: "Atunto Èkó 1.0 - Re-Engineering Lagos for Inclusive Prosperity."

The governorship hopeful described the blueprint as a comprehensive roadmap aimed at tackling insecurity, unemployment, poor infrastructure and social exclusion in the state.

He said Lagos residents de-

served visionary, transparent and accountable leadership capable of delivering inclusive prosperity across the state.

Adeoye said his administration would prioritise reliable power supply through Independent Power Projects and renewable energy initiatives.

He also promised potable water, flood mitigation, affordable housing and climate-resilient urban planning.

"We will deliver reliable power through Independent Power Projects and renewable energy, potable water for all, flood mitigation and modern infrastructure including the 4th Mainland Bridge.

"World-class healthcare, quality education with empha-

sis on STEM and TVET, and robust social protection for the vulnerable will be prioritised.

"Economic expansion will be driven by SME support, formalisation of the informal sector, tech hubs, creative industries, agriculture, the blue economy and responsible natural resources development.

"Security will be strengthened through state and community policing, Amotekun, and technology, while addressing root causes through youth and women empowerment," Adeoye said.

Adeoye said his administration would reform the civil service into a digital and performance-driven institution.

He promised full local government autonomy and con-

version of the 37 Local Council Development Areas into full Local Government Areas.

According to him, transparent fiscal management and real-time publication of budgets would be institutionalised.

Adeoye said an inclusive Lagos State Elders and Advisory Council would replace the current Governor's Advisory Council.

The proposed council, he said, would comprise traditional rulers, religious leaders, market leaders, business captains and former office holders.

Adeoye pledged strict adherence to rule of law, anti-corruption measures and contractor accountability in project execution.

Jonathan, AGF pray court to dismiss lawyer's motion seeking judge's recusal

ABUJA

Former President Goodluck Jonathan and the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), Mr Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, on Monday urged the Federal High Court to dismiss a lawyer's motion seeking his withdrawal from the case.

Jonathan and Fagbemi, through their lawyers, prayed Justice Peter Lifu to dismiss the motion with substantial cost.

The lawyer, Johnmary Jide-

obi, who is the plaintiff in the suit seeking to stop Jonathan from vying in the 2027 presidential election, had filed the motion.

In the motion on notice deposed to by his lawyer, Ndubuisi Ukpai, he is asking the judge to withdraw from the case, citing alleged bias.

Responding, Chief Chris Uche, SAN, who appeared for the ex-president, vehemently opposed Jideobi's motion.

The senior lawyer described application as frivolous, base-

less and founded on gross misrepresentation.

"In opposition, we filed a counter affidavit of five paragraphs on May 12.

"We want my lord to rely on the record of this honourable court which has entirely dismissed the plaintiff's entire claims as false and perjury," he said.

Uche, who urged the court to discountenance the application as constituting a gross abuse of the court process, prayed the court to dismiss

same with substantial cost and proceed with the case.

In the same vein, Fagbemi, who was represented in court by Mrs Maimuna Lami-Shiru, the Director of Civil Litigation and Public Law, Federal Ministry of Justice, also prayed the judge to dismissed the motion.

Lami-Shiru submitted that a judge may recuse himself from a case if he feels that his involvement will affect the impartiality of the suit

The lawyer, however, argued that that the instant motion was an abuse of court process.

She urged the court to dismiss the plaintiff's motion as being baseless, unmeritorious

and unfounded on proper provisions of the law.

According to the lawyer, he who comes to equity must come with clean hands.

Lami-Shiru, who urged the court to dismiss the suit with substantial cost, sought N2 million cost in favour of the

ministry.

In the main suit filed by the plaintiff, Jonathan and Fagbemi equally asked the court to dismiss same with substantial cost.

After taking arguments from lawyers to the plaintiff and the defendants, Justice Life fixed May 26 for judgment.

Again ex-Humanitarian minister fails to appear in court for arraignment

ABUJA

Former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Hajiya Sadiya Farouq, again failed to appear for her arraignment in an Abuja High Court on Monday.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was to arraign Farouq and two others on April 16, but she and a former Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Bashir Alkali, failed to appear in court.

Due to their absence, the court ordered for their arrest, meanwhile the 3rd defendant, Sani Nafiu Mohammed was

present on the April 16 sitting.

At the resumed sitting on Monday, Alkali and Nadia were present.

The Prosecution Counsel, Rotimi Jacobs, SAN told the court that the second defendant, Alkali after the notice of arrest warrant appeared at the EFCC Headquarters.

Jacobs urged the court to discharge the warrant of arrest issued on Alkali because he had surrendered.

"In the case of Farouq, the EFCC is still working with our international partners and will therefore need more time," Jacob's said.

Jacobs further informed the court that the 1st defendant filed a motion on April 27, asking the court to discharge the bench warrant issued on her.

He added the 1st defendant also filed a further affidavit on Friday and served the EFCC, in which the prosecution sent an advance copy of reply.



2026 MINISTERIAL NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Mrs Ibilola Kasumun; Lagos State Commissioner for Energy and Mineral Resources, Mr Abiodun Ogunleye and Lagos State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga Omotoso, during the 2026 Ministerial news conference by the Ministry, in commemoration of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu 7th Years in Office in Lagos on Monday.

Judiciary remains bedrock of modern society, says Uba Sani

KADUNA

Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State has described the judiciary as an indispensable institution in modern society, stressing that its independence and integrity must never be compromised.

Sani stated this on Monday at the commissioning of the Justice Muhammadu Bello Bar Centre and the opening of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Kaduna Branch Law Week 2026 in Kaduna.

He said the judiciary remained the guardian of constitutional order, protector of

civil liberties, defender of due process and custodian of societal equilibrium.

According to him, during periods of uncertainty and national strain, citizens often turn to the judiciary for reassurance that justice, fairness and reason will prevail.

"As a government, we fully recognise the pivotal role of the judiciary and the legal profession in sustaining democratic stability, advancing peaceful coexistence, protecting rights, resolving disputes and deepening public confidence in governance.

"Our administration therefore remains committed to support-

ing initiatives that strengthen judicial infrastructure, enhance institutional capacity, improve access to justice and promote professional excellence within the legal ecosystem," he said.

The governor noted that no society could attain sustainable development where the rule of law was weak, institutions were fragile and justice inaccessible to ordinary citizens.

Sani also described the theme of the 2026 Law Week, "ACTIVATE! Empowering Lawyers in the Digital Age," as timely and significant.

He said technological advancement, artificial intelligence

and digital communication were transforming governance, economies, legal practice and evidentiary standards globally.

"The legal profession must not merely react to technological transformations but proactively shape them.

"Lawyers of this generation must cultivate technological literacy alongside legal scholarship. They must embrace innovation while preserving the ethical foundations of the profession," he said.

Sani further urged legal practitioners to remain intellectually agile, globally aware and committed to justice and professional responsibility.

Plumber in court over alleged trespass

ABUJA

A 25-year-old plumber, Rabi Baba, was on Monday arraigned before a Life Camp Chief Magistrate's Court in Abuja for allegedly trespassing Citec Estate.

The defendant is standing trial on a charge bordering on criminal trespass, to which he pleaded not guilty.

The Prosecutor, Charity Nwachukwu, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on March 30 at about 3:00 a.m. at Citec Estate, Airport Road, Life Camp in Abuja.

Nwachukwu informed the court that the complainant Musa Edwin, the security guard attached to Citec Estate, reported the matter at the Life Camp Police Station on the

same date.

Nwachukwu alleged the defendant trespassed into Citec Estate at about 3:00 a.m. without the consent of anyone in charge of the premises.

She said while Edwin was on duty, he caught the defendant with a screwdriver and pliers.

The prosecutor said during police investigation and interrogation the defendant could

not give a satisfactory account of his actions.

According to the prosecutor, the offence contravenes the provisions of Section 342 of the Penal Code Law.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Musa Jobbo, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with one surety in like sum.

Jobbo adjourned the case until May 20 for hearing.

REMOVAL OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **CHUKWU ONYEKA SAMUEL**, now wish to be known and called **CHUKWUDI SAMUEL ONYEKACHI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **IDEHO GODWIN OMOLEI**, now wish to be known and addressed as **SARIKI GODWIN ALI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **AGBONLAHOR OSEMWOYENMWEN MAGRET** and **AGBONLAHOR OYENMWEN MAGRET**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and called **AGBONLAHOR OSEMWOYENMWEN MAGRET**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OZOR. A. THERESA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. EZECHUKWU THERESA AMUCHE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EKPEN USOH OBZUAYE** and **OBZUAYE-UZAMA USOH JESUOGIE**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known as **OBZUAYE-UZAMA USOH JESUOGIE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OSAWA-OBEIMHEN PHILO OSAYOMWANBOR** and **PHILO O. OBEIMHEN**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and called **OSAWA-OBEIMHEN PHILO OSAYOMWANBOR**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **CHIGBO PEACE UJUNWA**, now wish to be known and addressed **OKORO PEACE UJUNWA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS ADEJOR IGBE JOYCE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. IKHIFA JOYCE PRINCE HENRY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that **OSA FESTUS OSAYI** and **OSA FESTUS**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and called as **OSA FESTUS OSAYI**, also my correct date of birth is **14/5/1972**, not **10/5/1947** as wrongly written on my BVN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **IDUOZEE GRACE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ODARO GRACE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF MIDDLE NAME

I, formerly known as **SYLVESTER STEPHEN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **SYLVESTER STEPHEN OSAMUDIAMEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

NEWS**ECOWAS back Nigeria's 2026-2030 drug control plan****ABUJA**

The European Union (EU), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) have pledged support for Nigeria's 2026-2030 drug control plan.

The support, is aimed at tackling substance abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

The EU, UNODC and ECOWAS gave the assurance in their remarks at the opening session of a two-

day National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP) Consultative Forum organised by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) on Monday in Abuja.

The Deputy head, of the EU delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Mr Zissimos Vergos, said that the EU was prepared to assist Nigeria in its ongoing drug control efforts.

"Our presence here today is that of partners who have walked this uphill and rough road ourselves, and we continue doing that.

"We have learned valuable les-

sons from them, and we believe deeply that Nigeria's stability and Europe's security are inseparable.

"What affects the youth of Maiduguri or the streets of Ibadan does not stay within Nigerian borders."

Vergos said that drug trafficking was a transnational challenge, hence, the master plan laid before the forum was Nigeria's contribution to a transnational response.

He said Nigeria possessed the talent, institutions and experience needed to overcome challenges, noting that the new roadmap

provided a fresh direction.

He assured that the EU remained committed to partnering with the country in its implementation.

"I think we owe this to every Nigerian family that has been touched by addiction, by trafficking, by grief, or by the quiet despair of watching someone they love lose themselves.

"The same applies for every European family. Let us not leave this forum without giving them reason for hope.

"The EU has also updated its

own drug strategy and action plan. One of its main pillars is stronger international cooperation. We are here today to affirm this."

He, however, commended the leadership and personnel of the NDLEA, as well as other stakeholders, for their dedication and commitment to the agency's mandate.

"I think together we can turn the master plan into tangible progress, saving lives, securing communities, and fostering a healthier, safer future for Nigeria, for West Africa, for the Af-

rican continent, for Europe, for the world," he added.

In his goodwill message, UNODC Country Representative, Mr Chiekh Touré, noted that the world was currently witnessing a profound shift in the drug landscape.

This, he said is particularly with the rise of synthetic drugs, the increased sophistication of trafficking networks and the use of technology to expand illicit markets.

"Nigeria stands at the intersections of this."

COAS pays tribute to fallen heroes, reaffirms troops' welfare drive**ABUJA**

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has paid glowing tribute to fallen heroes and reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's commitment to enhanced troop welfare as the service reviewed its operational posture.

Shaibu spoke on Monday, at the opening of the COAS First Bi-Annual Conference 2026 in Abuja.

He led a solemn presentation of Nigerian Army Personnel Insurance cheques to families of deceased personnel and soldiers wounded in action at the event.

The COAS said the gesture reflected the army's enduring obligation to those who paid the supreme price and those who bear lasting injuries in service to the nation.

He said the sacrifices of fallen troops remain a permanent reminder of the cost of national security, adding that their courage continues to underpin ongoing counter-insurgency and internal security operations across the country.

Shaibu noted that the welfare of serving personnel remained central to his leadership philosophy, stressing that no operational success can be sustained without adequate care, motivation and support for troops on the front lines.

He reiterated the "Soldier First Concept" which prioritises welfare, morale, training, and professional development as critical enablers of combat effectiveness, and urged commanders to maintain close engagement with personnel under their command.

According to him, the Nigerian Army is intensifying efforts to improve living conditions, healthcare delivery, accommodation and operational support systems for troops and their families across formations nationwide.

Shaibu also disclosed ongoing initiatives aimed at expanding army's operational footprint through the establishment of new formations, alongside increased recruitment and infrastructure upgrades designed to strengthen response capacity in flash-points.

Ondo govt urges residents to embrace primary healthcare services**AKURE**

The Ondo State Primary Healthcare Development Agency has said that its 203 primary healthcare centres have improved for service delivery, urging residents to patronise them.

The Permanent Secretary of the agency, Dr Francis Akanbiemu, stated this at a stakeholders' engagement on Monday in Akure.

The engagement was tagged "Strengthening Primary Healthcare Services in Ondo State through Citizens Engagement and Ownership."

Akanbiemu, who was represented by the Director of Disease Control and Immunisation in the agency, Dr Victor Adefesoye, said the engagement was necessary to inform the participants on revitalisation in the primary healthcare centres.

According to him, the engagement will also provide opportunity for participants to make contributions that can improve the PHC services in the state.

"We are bringing all here to

cross-fertilise ideas on how to improve what is going on in our various health centres.

"We have improved in our various primary healthcare facilities by reconstructing, renovating and bringing innovation, good ones into our existing health care facilities.

"We also have supplies in terms of consumable and medications. We also have equipment, you know, our global system, the modern facilities, health care equipment that are available in our various health centres.

"We also have diagnostic kits, real-time reporting system is also there, to the extent that when a patient or a client gets to a health facility, without wasting time, we are able to identify the person's problem.

"We are able to conduct drug tests, we are able to make medications available and the person is treated without delay, so that in no distant time our health care facilities are working according to the global standard.

**NEWS CONFERENCE:**

L-R: All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Aspirants in Oyo State, Mr Akeem Agbaje; Mr Hakeem Alao; Chief Rauf Olaniyan; Prince Musbau Asanike; Dr Ololade Bakare, during the news conference by five Governorship Aspirant of APC in Oyo State on the conduct and outcome of the House of Representative Primary election in Ibadan on Monday.

Information Minister seeks public awareness on roles of Nigeria's tax ombudsman**ABUJA**

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, has urged the Office of the Tax Ombudsman to create more awareness for Nigerians to understand its roles in the nation's tax sector.

Idris gave the advice on Monday at the unveiling of the Official Website, Launching of a Toll Free Call Centre and Case Management System in Abuja.

The minister said he didn't really understand the roles of the Office of the Tax Ombudsman until when the ombuds-

man, Dr John Nwabueze, paid him a courtesy visit a week ago.

"And I told him that he needs to ensure that there is more public awareness so that Nigerians will get to understand what his roles are.

"This is imperative especially at the time that President Bola Tinubu has embarked on enormous reforms to reposition this country on a path to sustainable progress and development.

"It is important for all of us to know what these reforms entail and which direction they are going. Already, we have seen, as the President has highlighted, there is actually light at

the end of the tunnel."

The minister, who said the nation's economy had indeed turned the corner, added that for the first time in more than 30 years, the revenue that Nigeria has overseas has crossed the 50 billion dollars mark.

"Our GDP is on the rise. Headline inflation and food inflation is beating even the administration's own expectations really very low."

The minister said while the President was addressing people in Kigali, he revealed that over 20 billion dollars foreign direct investment would be coming to the country.

He emphasised the need for Nigerians to support the President's reform agenda, to give it more

time for it to come to fruition.

According to him, Nigerians should also ensure that all hands are on deck towards the right footing of the economy of this country.

In his remarks, Nigeria's tax Ombudsman, Dr John Nwabueze, said globally, modern tax systems are anchored not only on efficient revenue mobilisation, but also on fairness, accessibility, dispute resolution, and public trust.

Nwabueze said the Office of the Tax Ombudsman was therefore created as an independent and impartial institution to provide taxpayers with accessible, timely, cost-effective mechanisms for addressing complaints, resolving disputes, and promoting voluntary tax compliance.

Electricity: FCT residents decry high estimated bills, demand prepaid metres**ABUJA**

Some residents of Dei-Dei, Byazhin and Kubwa Communities of Bwari Area Council, FCT have expressed frustration over persistent and excessive estimated electricity billing by Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC).

The residents spoke in separate interviews with our correspondent on Monday in Abuja.

The residents who said that

bills have continued to rise in spite of irregular power supply, also decry the inability to acquire prepaid metres due to high cost.

They called on electricity distribution companies to provide prepaid meters to consumers to ensure transparency and accountability in billing.

One of the residents in Dei-Dei, Mohammed Nuhu, said that it had become difficult for families to cope with the charges.

He said: "Sometimes, we stay without power for days,

yet the bills still come with huge amounts.

"I believe if we have the prepaid metres, the charges will be less because it will only go high when there's light and you use appliances."

He, however, said that he was still making efforts to purchase the metre for his household.

Another resident, Blessing Umeh, said the estimated billing system had made it difficult for low-income earners to cope with the rising cost of living.

According to her, the estimated billing system still being used in some communities is unfair to the users.

This, she stated, was because there was no proper accountability from both ends.

She said: "Many residents are being charged for electricity they did not consume.

"Also, it is difficult for the electricity company to actually measure what a household had consumed within the stipulated period."

BBNaija season 11 audition begins May 22

The 11th edition of the Big Brother Naija (BBNaija), reality TV show auditioning is expected to commence on Friday May 22 through Sunday 24th, 2026.

The organisers announced the date at the weekend via the show's official social media platform.

The post reads: it's time! #BBNaija season 11 auditions registration is here.

Register from Friday 16 - 20 May to qualify for the physical auditions. Limited slots. Registration portal closes at maximum capacity. Link to secure your spot.

According to the organisers, "interested participants are required to follow the steps the link has provided while the date and location of the auditioning are Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th May, 2026 in three locations of Lagos, Abuja and Enugu depending on applicants choice of location.

"Watch your box for your confirmation email and show up at your audition venue on your confirmed date" the statement noted.

The post further added that "audition is free and open to persons of 21 years of age or older with valid identity document".



OKUNZUWA

My ex broke up with me for kissing in movie —Sandra Okunzuwa

Nollywood actress and producer, Sandra Okunzuwa has recounted how her ex-boyfriend broke up with her for kissing an actor in a movie.

Speaking in a recent episode of the BTS Reality podcast, Okunzuwa recalled that her ex ended their relationship after someone allegedly sent him a movie scene in which she kissed a male colleague.

She said her ex-boyfriend was insecure for breaking up with her over an onscreen kiss, stressing that actors do not enjoy kissing each other on set because of the presence of the shooting crew, environment and the conditions.

"When actors kiss while filming, there are about 20 or more people

watching them and instructions are also being dish out to them. Even the AC will be turned off, director will be monitoring and instructing them all the way through. So, how can anyone be in the mood or turned on in such condition and environment?" She asked

"Onscreen kisses are not even enjoyable if it is possible for them to be scrapped and viewers will still enjoy movies, then I am in support"

"Romantic scenes affect our personal relationships because some partners might get jealous"

"I once lost a relationship because someone sent my ex-boyfriend a scene from a movie where I kissed an actor. At that time, I felt his reaction came from a place of insecurity"

Why I wished for death in my 20s —Adekunle Gold

Afrobeats Orente crooner, Adekunle Gold has opened up about the stigmatisation he face as a sickle cell patient.

The singer in a recent interview with media personality Angela Yee, said people often look at him like he is going to die soon whenever he tells them he is living with sickle cell disease.

He recalled wishing himself death at 20 because of severe pains during a sickle cell crisis, adding that his mother who usually rebuke him whenever he prayed for death didn't try to stop him on that particular night.

"At 20, I had the craziest crisis of my life. I told God to take my life, and my mom couldn't even rebuke me. Normally she would but that night, it got to a point where it felt like the only thing that makes sense should just happen"

"But I am glad and grateful to God to be able to keep fighting and surviving sickle cell disease" he recalled.



ADEKUNLE GOLD

Money not solution to depression —Egbuson

Famous Nollywood actor, Timini Egbuson has shared his opinion on the relationship between money, depression and happiness.

The movie star said contrary to the popular claim that money ends depression, money does not always guarantee happiness, pointing out that even rich people can still be depressed.

Following the actor's position reaction sparked a deeper reflection on other causes of depression aside from lack and poverty, with many agreeing that money can't cure depression stemming from the loss of a loved one, anxiety and other natural incident.

However, some argued that the major cause of depression is lack of money, claiming that a lot of people would have be free from depression if they had money to solve their financial problems.



EGBUSON

Alleged affair with Frank Edoho: BBNaija star Tega Dominic breaks silence

Former Big Brother Naija star, Tega Dominic has addressed the rumour making the rounds that she has an affair with the TV star, Frank Edoho.

In a statement posted in her X handle, Tega explained that her friendship with Edoho started mid 2025 over social media and a shared birthday wishes to her mother while their only meeting happened having her manager in attendance.

Her post reads, "I honestly, did not want to speak on this because I have spent a long time trying to stay away from unnecessary drama, but at this point, my silence is no longer helping. I have absolutely no sexual or emotional relationship with Frank Edoho.

"Frank is a great guy and a very good friend of mine. We started talking around mid - last year after he sent a birthday message to my mom. Like many people in the industry, we already knew ourselves through social media and mutual familiarities"

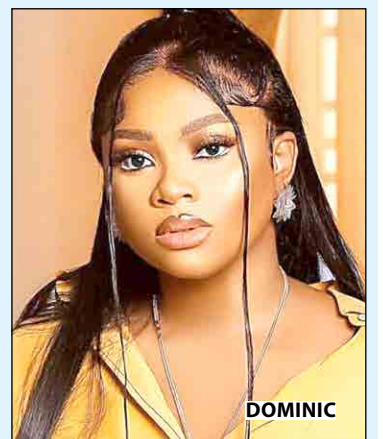
"He is my kinsman, there was never anything inappropriate between us. The first and only time I hung out with Frank was with my manager, Paul Ukonu's present" she explained

"I have absolutely nothing to hid, and honestly, if I ever had anything to

do with Frank romantically, I would say it with full chest"

"If you know me, you know I have never be the type to hide or sneak around, I say things exactly as they are, I have work too hard to build myself and my brand step by step, so, I wouldn't allow false accusations strain my name"

"I owe it a duty to my family, friends, supporters and the brand I work with to protect my reputation, I believe it is important for evidence to be provided because I will not let this slide, my name cannot be dragged carelessly into false narratives" she cautioned.



DOMINIC

ArtsWorld with Francis Odupute

08023680030

Thrift fashion in Nigeria: Style, survival and business

OMIJE RACHEAL ESEOSE

Thrift, popularly called *bend-down-select*, is a thriving clothing business in Nigeria. Many describe it as used clothes from foreign countries, while others call it second-hand wear, but its common name is *bend-down-select*, which later evolved into being called thrift. In Yorubaland, it is known as *okrika*, while in Benin it is known as *aloko*. Thrift has become a nationwide practice due to the fact that it is not limited to a particular city or state in Nigeria, but is found everywhere in the country because of the benefits it gives to individuals.

The rate at which people prefer thrift clothing to normal fashion brands in Nigeria is very high. Many individuals no longer spend money on high-quality wear because of thrift fashion. In the past, it was known as clothing for the poor, but now both the rich and poor wear it, and no one can differentiate them at a glance. Due to the high rate of inflation, everyday wear from fashion brands has become so expensive that many people now depend on thrift. When someone hears thrift, what comes to mind is clothes only, but thrift is not limited to clothes alone; it also includes shoes, caps, and many other body wears.

The word thrift means saving money and spending wisely, so when people say thrift fashion, they mean buying fairly used or second-hand clothes at a cheaper price instead of buying expensive brand-new clothes. That is why thrift fashion is often connected to affordability, budgeting, smart spending, and sustainability. In essence, it means being economical and resourceful.

The process by which thrift enters the country and is sold to individuals is in four stages, which include: Collection of used clothes abroad: In countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, people donate unwanted clothes to charities, recycling centers, thrift stores, and collection bins. In these countries, clothes no longer worn by individuals are often given out due to changes in fashion trends, body size, or personal preference. These clothes are usually dropped at church donation centers, nonprofit organizations, recycling programs, etc. Organizations such as Goodwill Industries and the Salvation Army are widely known for collecting donated clothing. These clothes are then sold locally in second-hand stores, while large quantities are kept for export to developing countries.

Sorting and baling: After collecting these clothes, workers inspect and separate them based on quality, fabric type, gender, age category, and fashion value. The clothes are then compressed into large bundles known as bales. Importers in African countries often purchase these bales through international second-hand clothing suppliers. Clothes discarded in Western countries often find a second life in African markets.

Distribution to major markets: After arriving in Nigeria, wholesalers sell the bales to retailers in major thrift markets such as Katangia Market, Yaba Market, Aswani Market, and many more. Retailers then open the bales, wash or style the clothes, and resell them individually.

Online resale and social media: Due to the rise of social media, many thrift sellers no longer depend only on physical markets. They now sell through social platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and online thrift stores. Some even re-brand, model, or customize thrift pieces before reselling them. This is one reason why thrift fashion has become trendy among Nigerian youths.

The growth of thrift fashion in Nigeria is

STYLE WITH PURPOSE

Thrifted & Timeless

WHY THRIFT FASHION IS MORE THAN A TREND

From unique finds to a lighter footprint, thrifting is redefining style for a new generation.



ONE-OF-A-KIND FINDS
Discover pieces with character and stories you won't find anywhere else.



GOOD FOR THE PLANET
Choosing secondhand helps reduce waste and supports a more sustainable future.



STYLE THAT'S YOU
Mix, match, and express yourself—thrifted fashion makes it personal.

*Look good. Do good.
Feel even better.*



**SMALL CHOICES,
BIG IMPACT**

Every thrifted piece is a vote for a more conscious, creative, and connected world.

THRIFT

backed by various factors, several of which include:

Economic hardships and rising prices: This has become a major factor in the increase of thrift fashion sales in Nigerian markets. Many Nigerians cannot easily afford expensive boutique clothes anymore due to inflation and the high cost of living. Thrift gives people a cheaper alternative while still allowing them to dress well. For example, a pair of jeans that may cost ₦40,000 in a boutique can sometimes be bought for ₦5,000 or less in thrift markets. The large price difference makes thrift fashion attractive to people trying to maintain a good appearance. Many families now focus more on survival and careful spending. Fashion lovers, students, workers, and even middle-class Nigerians have turned to thrift clothing as a more affordable choice.

Social media influence: Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and many others have made thrift fashion more popular. Content creators now post upgraded ways in which thrift can be used and worn, such as thrift hauls, "drip on a budget" content, and before-and-after styling videos, which have helped remove the old stigma around *okrika*.

It was not formerly called thrift, but due to the rise of a new generation, it is now termed thrift fashion. Social media has transformed thrift from being socially condemned into something socially accepted. Social media has also increased the visibility of online thrift businesses. Many thrift sellers now model thrift clothes online and deliver them directly to customers. Social media has also promoted the idea that

fashion is not about expensive brands, but about creativity.

Thrift fashion business: Many young Nigerians, including university students, have found thrift fashion to be a source of income. It has become a booming business. Some buy clothes in bulk from markets and resell them online through Instagram or WhatsApp Business, while others run small thrift pages targeted at students and young professionals. This shows that thrift is not just a style but also an economic opportunity.

Unique fashion: Many youths prefer thrift fashion because it helps them stand out. Unlike mass-produced clothing, thrift items often include vintage wear, rare designs, foreign brands, and unique streetwear styles, which help people create personal fashion identities. An example is *alte* fashion.

Sustainability and environmental awareness: Some people now support thrift fashion because it reduces waste. Instead of throwing clothes away, garments are reused and restyled. This supports sustainable fashion and reduces environmental pollution.

Many people may not realize that in this business there are different grades in the arrangement and sale of thrift clothing. There is first grade, which is high quality and more expensive; second grade, which is more common and cheaper; and lastly clearance grade, which is of lower quality and the cheapest.

Despite the benefits thrift brings to individuals, it also has many disadvantages, which include:

Effect on the local textile industry: Many Ni-

gerians prefer cheaper imported thrift clothes instead of locally made garments because they are more affordable. This indirectly reduces the demand for Nigerian-made clothing and tailoring businesses, resulting in the shutdown of textile companies over the years.

Loss of jobs: When locally made clothes are not patronized, it affects factory workers, tailors, fashion designers, and textile producers, thereby weakening the growth of Nigeria's fashion manufacturing sector.

Dependence on foreign goods: Due to heavy reliance on thrift clothing, dependence on foreign goods increases, thereby discouraging local production.

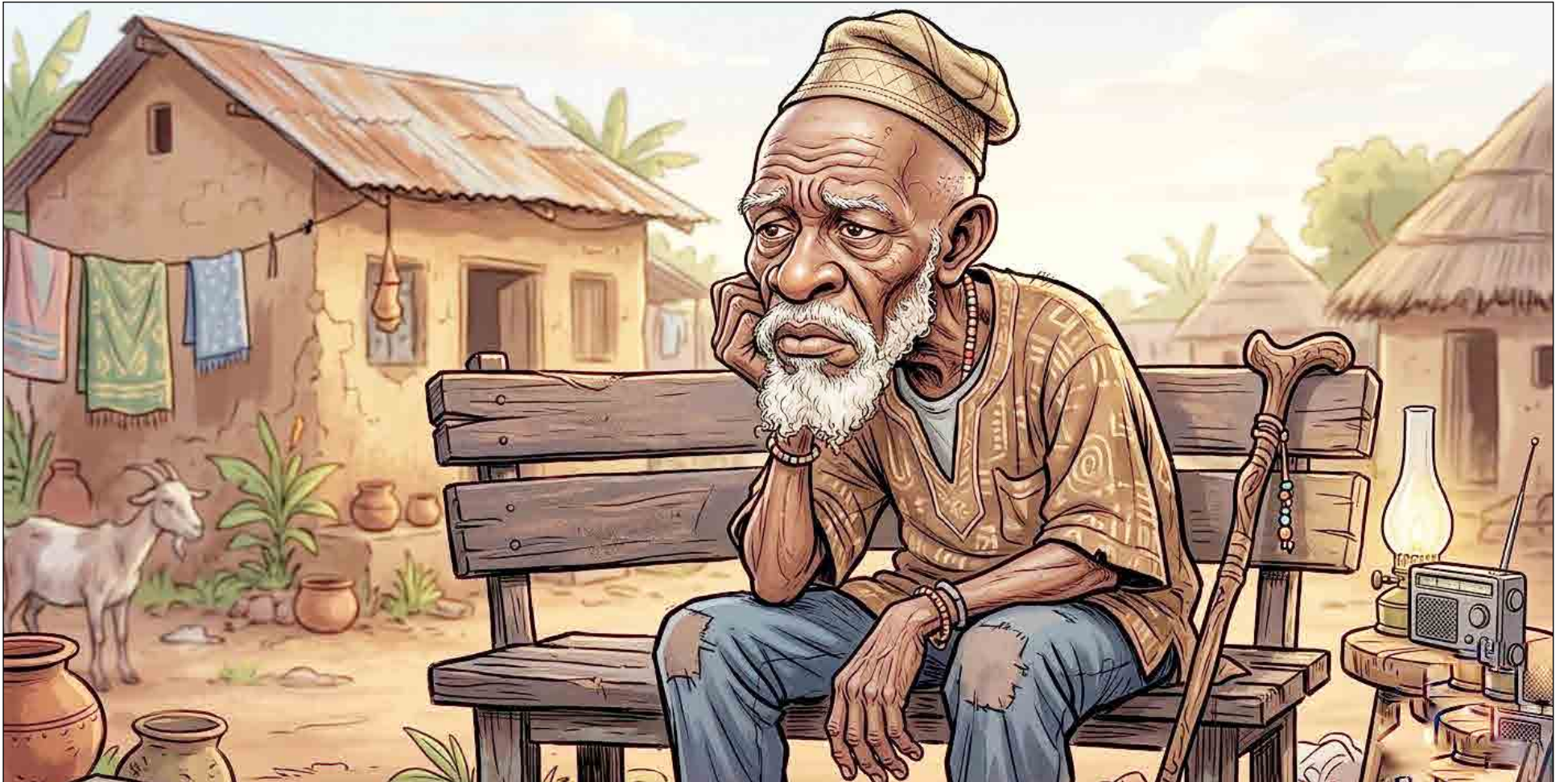
Health and hygiene concerns: Some thrift clothes may carry bacteria, fungi, skin infections, or unpleasant odours if they are not properly washed or disinfected before use.

Smuggling and illegal importation: Although restrictions exist on second-hand goods, many products still enter Nigeria through smuggling routes and informal trade channels. This can lead to corruption at borders, difficulty regulating the market, and loss of government revenue.

Although thrift fashion has become a major part of Nigeria's fashion culture due to its affordability, creativity, and business opportunities, concerns still remain about its effect on local textile industries and national development. As more Nigerians continue to embrace thrift fashion because of economic hardship and rising prices, one important question remains: should affordability be prioritised over the growth and sustainability of locally made products in Nigeria?

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —



Why global platforms are optimizing Nollywood for profit

IZEGAEGBE IMOSIME DAVIDSON

For decades, from what we have witnessed, Nollywood was the ultimate guerilla film industry that was the cynosure of all eyes. The film industry was built on the back of Alaba International Market, powered by the frantic hum of diesel generators, and distributed first via VHS, scratched VCDs, DVD which had direct marketing points in Upper Iwaka at Onitsha and major cities across Nigeria from which these film contents were sold to Nigerians.

If you live in Nigeria during the film era of selling VHS, VCDs and DVDs in the humid traffics, wheelbarrows, stores and so on. However, it was chaotic, prolific, and entirely self-sustained. But as we move through the years down to 2026, the film landscape known later on as Nollywood landscape has shifted. The dusty plastic cases have been replaced by sleek user interfaces, and the local marketers, distributors have been supplanted by Silicon Valley algorithms. Shocking?

Now let us get something straight before I am taken out of context. This write up is not dealing on the Nigeria film history which actually started from the colonial era to the Ola Balogun, Eddie Ugboma and their contemporaries before the emergence of the acronym "Nollywood" as a name for the Nigeria film industry.

The entry of global streaming giants like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, African Magic, etc. despite their recent strategic pivot, and the Google-owned behemoth, YouTube, into Nigeria is not a mission of cultural philanthropy or gifts from Father Christmas. It is a deliberate, intentional and calculated, high-stakes optimization of a creative goldmine for the sake of global profit margins, and if permitted to add, purely to exploit.

I remember how the film lovers and industry stakeholders in grand style openly welcomed these various platforms into the Nigeria film

distribution space. Now the global platforms are here in Nollywood because they have identified a unique efficiency of scale. Traditionally, producing a blockbuster in Hollywood involves eye-watering budgets and complex union regulations amongst others. In contrast, if you know, Nollywood offers high-octane storytelling at a fraction of the cost. By 2023, from research, Netflix had invested roughly \$23 million in Nigerian content only, a significant sum against the local Naira when converted, but barely the catering budget for a single season of any major US series. This might sound funny, right? But it is the sad truth.

By injecting eye catching capital into Nollywood, these platforms are now in Shylock's style, optimizing their own libraries. Just imagine the acquisition of high-quality, culturally resonant contents like "The Black Book" or "Jagun Jagun" that can travel across the African diaspora and beyond. For a platform, a Nigerian hit is a dual-threat asset: it secures the massive, burgeoning West African market while simultaneously serving millions of subscribers in London, Houston, and Toronto. It is the ultimate high-return, low-risk investment in a saturated global attention economy.

The true optimization now happening behind the scenes is not just about the films alone; it's about the data. Global platforms now systematically operate on a feedback loop that Nollywood never previously possessed, even before, a producer would know that his film was a hit or sold out. Today, Netflix and YouTube know exactly when a viewer in Kano pauses a movie, when a viewer in Iykeorhionwon watches a movie, when actors cause a surge in engagement, and what specific tropes lead to a binge-watch.

This data always allow global platforms to engineer hits. We are seeing a shift toward algorithm-friendly narratives, like faster pacing, immediate emotional hooks, and high visual gloss, designed to satisfy the metrics of global

watch-time. By refining our Nollywood output to fit these digital parameters, platforms would maximize their Stickiness. We need to know that these people are not just selling movies; they are optimizing the Nigerian creative spirit to keep users locked within their proprietary ecosystems. E shock you?

Do you know that there is a growing realization in 2026 that this relationship is often more extractive than collaborative. While global platforms have undoubtedly raised production standards, also note that they have created a creativity ceiling. When Amazon Prime Video scaled back its original African commissions in 2024, do we still remember how it sent shockwaves through the industry then? The sad truth is, it revealed a cold truth. However, to a global platform, Nollywood is just a line item on a balance sheet. If the subscriber growth does not hit a specific or particular target, the optimization therein ends as quickly as it began.

Furthermore, the "Originals" model often strips local creators of their intellectual property. In the old Alaba, Idumota or Upper Iwaka days, the filmmaker owned the film 'master', but in the era of the global streamer, the platform now owns the rights in perpetuity. You may or may not know it, but these people are not just buying a license, they are shylockly mining the cultural heritage of a nation to build a financial digital library that will generate subscription revenue for decades to come for them, even many years after the original production fee has been spent.

Perhaps the most fascinating development in 2026 is the rise of the YouTube-to-Nollywood pipeline. As subscription-based models, Showmax for instance faced structural hurdles due to the Nigeria's high data costs and fluctuating currency. I know many other struggling platforms faced with this data monster, even as YouTube emerged as the dominant force.

Global platforms like YouTube optimize Nolly-

wood by leveraging an ad-based model that fits the Nigerian economic reality. By providing a free tier, they capture the mass market that cannot afford a premium Netflix sub. However, this too is an optimization for profit. YouTube's Partner Program as we know thrives on volume. Some Nigerian producers now release films directly to YouTube, reaching millions easily. While this empowers the filmmaker with instant global distribution, it also allows Google to harvest massive amounts of advertising revenue and user data from a demographic that was previously off the grid.

The story of 2026 is not just about foreign dominance; it is about the Nigerian response as audience or viewer. Filmmakers are now diversifying, using Netflix for prestige and global billboard visibility, while keeping their high-volume bread and butter content on YouTube or other local platforms. They are learning to play the global game with these shylocks without surrendering their locker room keys. Global platforms are in Nollywood because the industry is a growth engine in a world of stagnating markets. They are here to optimize the raw, vibrant energy of Nigerian storytelling style into a polished, data-driven product that feeds a global appetite, except the original owner.

The danger is that in the process of optimizing solely for profit, the very thread that made Nollywood garment special is facing the scissor; its unapologetic, local, and often unpolished soul, might be sanded down to fit a global aesthetic. As the Silicon Scramble for Nigeria continues, the challenge for Nollywood is to ensure that while the platforms are busy optimizing for their profits, the industry is busy securing its own sovereignty. And never forget that the cameras are rolling, the Director is calling the creative shots, the crew like soldiers under the command of a seasoned war general are ever ready, the world is watching, and for the first time, the price of the ticket of your creative soul is being negotiated in real-time. How do you feel about it?

INTERVIEW

House of Reps shakeup: Nomination battles, fallen incumbents, and what it means for 2027



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MEMBERS

ANTAR NIYI OLALEKAN

The scramble for tickets ahead of the 2027 general elections has already begun, and nowhere is the turbulence more visible than in the ongoing House of Representatives nomination process. Across party lines, primaries and consensus arrangements have produced a mix of expected endorsements, shock upsets, and bitter fallouts. For many federal lawmakers seeking reelection, the dream of returning to the Green Chamber has ended abruptly.

The implications go beyond individual careers. The churn in the House of Representatives is a leading indicator of voter mood, party dynamics, and the shifting balance of power ahead of 2027.

THE NOMINATION PROCESS SO FAR

Nigeria's major political parties - APC, PDP, LP, and NNPP - have all held various stages of their candidate selection processes for the 360 House of Representatives seats. While the official INEC timetable for the 2027 elections is still pending, internal party timelines have pushed primaries forward to secure early momentum and avoid last-minute litigation.

In several states, party leadership opted for consensus candidates to reduce friction. In others, direct and indirect primaries produced bruising contests. The result: a significant number of sitting members failed to secure the return ticket.

WHY INCUMBENTS ARE FALLING

The failure of reelection bids by sitting lawmakers is not new in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. But the scale in this cycle is notable. Three main factors explain it:

1. ANTI-INCUMBENCY AND PERFORMANCE DEFICIT

Constituents are increasingly judging lawmakers on visible projects, constituency interventions, and accessibility. Many incumbents who relied on party structures without grassroots engagement have been rejected. Social media and local radio have amplified voter dissatisfaction, making it harder to run on name recognition alone.

2. PARTY INTERNAL POLITICS

Party leaders at state and zonal levels are reasserting control over ticket allocation. In some cases, governors and party chieftains are pushing loyalists to replace independent-minded lawmakers. In others, new entrants with deeper pockets have outspent incumbents in delegate mobilization.

3. COALITION SHIFTS AND DEFECTIONS

The post-2023 realignment continues. Lawmakers who defected or are per-

ceived as disloyal to their original party platform have faced pushback. Conversely, high-profile defectors into dominant parties have displaced sitting members to accommodate new alliances.

NOTABLE CASUALTIES

While full lists are still being finalized, early results show casualties across all six geopolitical zones. In the North West and North Central, several two-term and three-term members lost to younger challengers campaigning on "fresh blood" platforms. In the South and South East, zoning agreements and ethnic calculations have displaced incumbents who previously enjoyed smooth renomination.

The pattern is clear: longevity in office is no longer a guarantee. Even lawmakers with committee chairmanships and visible federal appointments have not been spared.

WHAT IT PORTENDS FOR 2027

The current House shakeup signals

four things for the 2027 elections:

A MORE COMPETITIVE FIELD

With new candidates emerging, 2027 is shaping up to be one of the most competitive House elections since 2011. Voters will have more choices, and party primaries will matter more than ever in determining the eventual winner.

WEAKENING OF THE "CAREER POLITICIAN" MODEL

The era where a lawmaker could stay in the House for 12-16 years by virtue of incumbency alone is fading. Performance, local relevance, and party loyalty are now the currency of survival.

IMPACT ON LEGISLATION AND OVERSIGHT

A high turnover rate means loss of institutional memory. Experienced lawmakers who understand legislative procedure, budget processes, and oversight mechanisms will exit. The 11th Assembly, if it reflects this trend, may start slow on complex legislation unless capacity building is prioritized.

TESTING GROUND FOR PARTY STRENGTH

The way parties manage post-primary fallouts will determine their 2027 strength. Where aggrieved aspirants defect or sabotage, the party risks losing seats. Where reconciliation works, parties can convert primary energy into general election momentum.

VOTER EXPECTATIONS ARE CHANGING

Beneath the political maneuvering is a deeper shift: voters want results. The National Assembly's reputation has suffered from perceptions of elitism

and detachment. Constituents now demand constituency projects, visible advocacy on insecurity, unemployment, and rising costs, and regular feedback.

Lawmakers who failed to get the ticket often cited "lack of grassroots presence" as the reason. Those who succeeded did so by running active constituency offices, engaging traditional rulers, and leveraging local associations.

THE ROLE OF MONEY AND STRUCTURE

Money remains a factor, but its influence is evolving. Cash-for-delegate tactics still occur, but they are less effective without grassroots structure. Candidates who combined funding with ward-level mobilization, youth engagement, and clear messaging won out.

The rise of independent media and citizen observers has also made it harder to hide underperformance. Constituents are sharing scorecards of lawmakers' bills, motions, and projects online, creating informal accountability.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next phase is the general election campaign. Candidates who lost at primaries will decide whether to defect, run independently where possible, or support party candidates. Party leadership will need to manage these dynamics to avoid splitting the vote.

For the electorate, the message is clear: the ballot in 2027 will reward visibility, responsiveness, and delivery more than seniority. For the parties, the challenge is to convert internal competition into electoral strength.

The House of Representatives has always been the people's chamber. The ongoing nomination process is reminding both politicians and voters of that fact.

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Lawmakers who failed to get the ticket often cited "lack of grassroots presence" as the reason. Those who succeeded did so by running active constituency offices, engaging traditional rulers, and leveraging local associations

Foreign

NEWS

**WASH HANDS AND TAKE TEMPERATURES:**

All visitors and patients must wash hands and take temperatures before entering Kyeshero Hospital in Goma on 18 May.

At least 100 deaths reported in Ebola outbreak in DR Congo as six Americans exposed

At least 100 deaths have been reported in an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with more than 390 cases suspected, the head of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has told the BBC.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the outbreak an international emergency.

The current strain of Ebola is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, for which there are no approved drugs or vaccines.

There are also two confirmed cases and one death in Uganda, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

At least six Americans have been exposed to the Ebola virus during the outbreak in the DR Congo, sources have told CBS News, the BBC's US partner.

One American is believed to

have symptoms, with three others said to have faced a high-risk contact or exposure. It is unclear whether any have been infected.

The CDC said it was supporting the "safe withdrawal of a small number of Americans who are directly affected", but did not confirm how many.

The US government is reportedly looking to arrange transport for the small group of Americans in DR Congo to a safe quarantine location, a source told health news site STAT.

Quoting a source, the site adds that the group could be taken to a US military base in Germany, though this has not been confirmed.

The CDC declined to answer direct questions about the US citizens reportedly affected during a press conference on Sunday.

In an update on Monday, the public health agency said the risk to the US was relatively low, but

said it would introduce a range of measures to prevent the disease from entering the country.

This includes monitoring travellers arriving from affected areas and placing entry restrictions on non-US passport holders if they have been in Uganda, DR Congo or South Sudan in the last 21 days.

The CDC said it would work with airlines and other partners to carry out contact tracing of passengers, increase testing capacity and hospital readiness to respond to the outbreak.

The US has also issued a Level Four travel advisory - its most severe level - warning against travel to the DR Congo.

The WHO has said the outbreak in DR Congo's eastern Ituri province is a public health emergency of international concern, but did not meet the criteria of a pandemic.

The agency has also warned

it could potentially be "a much larger outbreak" than what is currently being detected and reported, with significant risk of local and regional spread.

More than 28,600 people were infected by Ebola during the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa, the largest outbreak of the virus since its discovery in 1976.

The disease spread to a number of countries within and outside of West Africa, including Guinea, Sierra Leone, the United States, the United Kingdom and Italy, killing 11,325 people.

Jean Kaseya, director general of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, warned that in the absence of vaccines and effective medicines people should follow public health measures, including the guidance about handling the funerals of those who have died from the disease.

Death toll from Israeli strikes on Lebanon passes 3,000, officials say

A nominal ceasefire has been in place for a month, but fighting has continued

Lebanon's health ministry says the number of people killed in the country by Israeli strikes during the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, which escalated at the beginning of March, has surpassed 3,000.

It put the death toll at 3,020 on Monday, a grim milestone in the fighting that shows no sign of abating despite a fragile ceasefire.

Lebanon was drawn into the war on 2 March, when the Iran-backed armed Shia Islamist group Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel after an Israeli strike killed Iran's supreme leader.

The toll has continued to climb even after Lebanon and Israel agreed on Friday to extend their truce by 45 days, with the

two sides set to resume negotiations at the beginning of June.

The health ministry says more than 400 of the deaths have occurred since the ceasefire came into effect on 17 April - a period marked by repeated violations on both sides.

The truce deal, brokered by the United States, allows Israel to carry out strikes it says are aimed at countering Hezbollah's military activity.

Lebanon has condemned the attacks, saying they undermine its efforts to re-establish the state's exclusive control over armed groups' weapons.

Since the ceasefire extension was announced on Friday, Israeli strikes on towns and villages across southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley have continued, killing dozens of people.

Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt booted by graduates at mention of AI

Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt was booed by students as he spoke about the rise of artificial intelligence during his speech at University of Arizona's graduation ceremony, underscoring growing anxiety over AI's impact on jobs.

"I know what many of you are feeling about that. I can hear you," Schmidt told graduates as jeers rang out at the venue during remarks comparing today's AI boom to the rise of computers four decades ago.

The reaction reflects a broader unease on campuses, where speakers who mention AI are increasingly being met with hostility from students.

A recent poll suggests many students view AI as both a threat to their future and an obstacle to their intellectual development.

Speaking to graduates about to enter the workforce, Schmidt conceded that their fears about AI were "rational" but urged the crowd to adapt to the sprawling technology as "AI will shape the world".

He urged the graduates to think about how they will shape AI.

"The future is not yet finished. It is now your turn to shape it," he said.

Schmidt is not alone in drawing backlash over the issue.

Gloria Caulfield, a real estate executive, saw a similar reception earlier this month at the University of Central Florida.

"The rise of artificial intelligence is the next industrial revolution," she said as the crowd booed.

At the mention of AI at Middle Tennessee State University commencement, Scott Borchetta, CEO of Big Machine Records, was also met with jeers.

His response to graduates: "Deal with it, like I said, it's a tool."

The tension comes amid mounting concern among young Americans about the growing role of AI in the workplace.

Fearing automation, significant numbers of students are rethinking their fields of study, according to a Lumina Foundation-Gallup 2026 State of Higher Education Study.

Judge rules gun, writings are admissible in Luigi Mangione's New York murder trial

A New York judge will allow a gun and writings found in Luigi Mangione's backpack after his 2024 arrest to be presented at his state murder trial, but has ruled that other items are inadmissible.

Judge Gregory Carro ruled on Monday that certain evidence "must be suppressed, including the magazine, cell-phone, passport, wallet and computer chip" found with Mangione at a Pennsylvania McDonald's.

Carro said that evidence was recovered as part of an "improper and warrantless search" of the then-26-year-old accused of killing UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson.

However, prosecutors will

be allowed to present items found during a search at a police station, including include a gun and a notebook.

Carro also ruled that some of Mangione's questioning by the officers who initially encountered him at the Pennsylvania fast food restaurant must be excluded from trial. Those include questions about Mangione lying about his name, and asking if he had a fake identification card.

Prosecutors will be able to admit evidence from later questioning, when Mangione was in custody, Carro ruled.

Mangione is accused of shooting and killing Thompson on a Manhattan street in December 2024. He faces state charges including second de-

gree murder, several firearms charges, and stalking. He has pleaded not guilty.

Mangione is also charged in a separate federal case, in which he has also pleaded not guilty.

He was arrested in Altoona, Pennsylvania several days after Thompson's shooting in New York following a nation-wide manhunt.

Mangione's defence team had mounted an aggressive bid to exclude all evidence from the McDonald's stop as well as some of the statements he made to officers. They argued that police improperly searched his bag without a warrant, and did not properly question Mangione.

The court heard several days of arguments over this

Bodies of missing Italian divers found in Maldives

The bodies of four Italian divers who went missing during a scuba diving accident in the Maldives last week have been located, officials have confirmed to the BBC.

The Italians were found inside a 60-metre-deep (197ft) cave in Vaavu Atoll by a joint team of highly trained Finnish and Maldivian divers, the officials said.

The body of a fifth Italian diver, a member of the group, had already been recovered shortly after Thursday's accident.

A Maldivian rescue diver also died on Saturday while searching for the bodies of the group.

It is believed to be the worst single diving accident in the tiny Indian Ocean nation, a popular tourist destination because of its string of coral islands.

"Further dives [are] to be carried out in the coming

days to recover the bodies," Mohamed Hossain Shareef, a Maldivian government spokesperson, said in a message to the BBC.

Two of the bodies would be recovered on Tuesday and the remaining two the following day, he said.

Italy's foreign ministry said the four bodies were located in the cave's third section - the furthest from the entrance - and that additional dives would be needed to recover them.

The body of the first Italian victim is believed to have been located near the entrance to the same cave on Thursday.

Two of the Italian divers - Prof Monica Montefalcone and research fellow Muriel Oddenino from the University of Genoa - were in the Maldives looking at the impact of cli-

mate change on biodiversity.

Giorgia Sommacal, Prof Montefalcone's daughter and a student at the university, and Federico Gualtieri, who was a recent graduate, were also part of the diving group.

The fifth Italian victim was boat operations manager and diving instructor Gianluca Benedetti. His body was the first to be recovered, Italian media reported.

The group entered the water at Vaavu Atoll on Thursday morning and were reported missing when they failed to resurface later on.

Police said the weather was rough in the area, about 100km (62 miles) south of the capital, Male, when the group went missing. A yellow warning was issued for passenger boats and fishermen.

NEWS**Foreign****Israeli forces board Gaza-bound flotilla near Cyprus, activists say**

Pro-Palestinian activists say Israeli forces have intercepted a flotilla of more than 50 boats carrying aid for Gaza in international waters west of Cyprus.

The Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) said its fleet was boarded in what it called "another illegal, high-seas aggression" about 250 nautical miles (460km) from Gaza, which is under an Israeli maritime blockade. Its video stream showed commandos climbing onto several boats.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the raid was "effectively neutralizing a malicious plan designed to break the isolation we have imposed on Hamas terrorists in Gaza".

Last month, Israeli forces intercepted 22 boats from the same flotilla near Crete.

In that incident, 181 activists on board were detained, all but two of whom were released on the Greek island the next day following widespread international condemnation.

Spanish national Saif Abu Keshk and Brazilian national Thiago Ávila were taken back to Israel for questioning and deported after spending 10 days in custody.

The flotilla's remaining boats then sailed to the Turkish port

of Marmaris, where 54 boats departed last Thursday and headed south-east towards Gaza. More than 460 activists from 45 countries were said to be taking part.

Just after 10:30 in Cyprus (07:30 GMT) on Monday, live video broadcast on the GSF's website showed commandos on a raiding craft approaching a sailboat, then boarding it as the passengers raised their hands.

"Military vessels are currently intercepting our fleet and [Israeli] forces are boarding the first of our boats in broad daylight," the GSF's organisers said in a statement.

"We demand safe passage for our legal, non-violent humanitarian mission," it added. "Governments must act now to stop these illegal acts or piracy meant to maintain Israel's genocidal siege on Gaza."

On Monday afternoon, the organisers announced that Israeli forces had so far intercepted 16 vessels in the flotilla.

Some two dozen Turkish nationals were on board the intercepted vessels, they said.

Turkey's foreign ministry condemned "the intervention by Israeli forces in international waters... which constitutes a new act of piracy".

Rush-hour chaos sweeps New York after busiest rail system shutdown

A strike on the busiest rail system has caused travel chaos for thousands of New York commuters during rush hour on Monday morning, as rail workers returned to the negotiating table with transportation officials.

At New York's Penn Station - where roughly 600,000 people pass through a typical day - it was eerily quiet as commuters scrambled to figure out ways to reach their destinations.

"There are no trains," said Brooklyn resident Mekan Ezenov, who was trying to get to a Long Island airport. "We looked at Uber, but it's like \$250."

New York's Metropolitan Transportation Agency is offering free shuttle buses in the city for some routes, but has warned of "severe congestion and delays".

The strike is expected to affect roughly 250,000 weekday riders on the trains servicing New York's eastern suburbs and Long Island's famous beaches that stretch from the city out to the Hamptons and Montauk.

Unions representing about 3,500 workers on the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) launched their strike on Saturday after failing to reach a deal with rail management over pay and work rules.

Negotiations with MTA resumed on Sunday and Monday after New York Governor Kathy Hochul urged both sides to return to talks.

A federal labour agency stepped in on Sunday to help resume the

bargaining over the first strike on the LIRR in over 30 years.

The unions say they are seeking improved pay and work conditions after years without wage increases.

In Midtown Manhattan, LIRR union workers gathered to protest on Monday morning. They marched in a circle calling for fair wages, a fair contract and "dignity".

A union representative from the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, who had been leading his fellow picketers in a chant at the Jamaica, Queens LIRR station, told the BBC he and other union members would rather be at work today.

"We're hardworking men and women," Olivier Desinor said. "It's not one of the best positions we want to be in, but, thankfully, we're together in solidarity, and we're gonna get through this."

Olivier Desinor is a rail worker who says he is fighting for fair pay

Unions have been asking for a wage increase of five percent for the next year of their contract, which begins in June.

The MTA had offered a 3% raise with options that could bring it up to 4.5%, according to the BBC's US partner CBS News.

On Sunday, Hochul defended the transportation authority and said New York was a "pro-labour state".

"We believe in working men and women receiving a fair wage and benefits, but the MTA cannot agree to a contract that would raise fares as much as 8% and risk hiking taxes for Long Islanders," she said.

Trump warns 'clock is ticking' for Iran as peace progress stalls

US President Donald Trump has warned Iran the "clock is ticking" as talks to bring the war to an end have stalled.

"They better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them," he wrote on his Truth Social platform. "TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!"

The message came as the president spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday, the Times of Israel reported, citing Netanyahu's office.

On Monday Iran said it had responded to the latest US proposal and that exchanges with Washington were continuing through Pakistani mediators.

"As we announced yesterday, our concerns were conveyed to the American side," the country's foreign ministry spokesperson said at a media briefing, the AFP reported.

Iranian media earlier reported the US had failed to make any concrete concessions to Tehran, with the semi-official Mehr news agency saying a lack of compromise would lead to an "impasse in the negotiations".

Trump's message echoed his threat that a "whole civilisation" would die unless Iran agreed to a deal to end the war, shortly before the ceasefire was announced in early April.

The president warned earlier this week that truce was on "massive life support" after rejecting Tehran's demands, labelling them "totally unacceptable". Esmail Baghaei, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, then insisted they were "responsible" and "generous".

According to Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency, the Iranian asks included an immediate end to the war on all fronts - a reference to the con-

tinued Israeli attacks against Iran-supported Hezbollah in Lebanon - a halt to the US naval blockade of Iranian ports, and guarantees of no further attacks on Iran.

They also reportedly included a demand for compensation for war damage and an emphasis on Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency said on Sunday that Washington had set five conditions in response to Tehran's proposal.

They reportedly included a demand that Iran keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the US.

Trump suggested on Friday that he would accept a 20-year suspension by Iran of its nuclear programme - a major sticking point between the two countries - in what appeared

to be confirmation of a shift in position away from a demand for a total end to it.

Israeli and US forces began massive air strikes on Iran on 28 February. The ceasefire meant to facilitate talks has largely been observed despite occasional exchanges of fire.

Iran has also continued to control the Strait of Hormuz, effectively closing the vital waterway through which around 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas travels.

The move, which Iran has said is in retaliation for US and Israeli attacks, has sent oil prices soaring globally.

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

Pakistan has been playing the role of mediator between the US and Iran, but both sides still appear to be far apart.

**PROTESTERS:**

The protests have been triggered by a record increase in the cost of fuel.

Strike over high fuel prices paralyzes transport in Kenya

Thousands of Kenyan commuters have been stranded and businesses paralysed as public transport operators went on a nationwide strike to protest against recent increases in the cost of fuel.

Key roads in the capital Nairobi remained largely empty, forcing some commuters to walk to work, with other parts of the country also affected by the transport crisis. Some businesses in Nairobi remained shut and schools asked students to stay at home.

Protesters have been blocked roads and lighting burning barricades. More than 200 have been arrested, police say.

The strike comes days after the authorities raised petroleum prices to record levels, with costs increasing by more than 20%.

Kenya, like many other African countries, relies heavily on fuel imports from the Gulf, a sup-

ply route disrupted by the US-Israel conflict with Iran that began on 28 February. Even though a ceasefire has been declared, fuel prices have remained high as the Strait of Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's oil passes through, is still blocked.

Many passengers were stranded at bus stops in the capital in the morning. Others arriving from elsewhere to Nairobi could not get into the city.

"There is no matatu anywhere... We used to pay 100 to 150 shillings, right now it's 300. Life is becoming so unbearable. So please, [President William] Ruto, wherever you are, if you can listen to us Kenyans, please lower those fuel prices," a resident of Kitengela on the outskirts of the city, who identified himself as Charles, told the Reuters news agency.

The conductor of a bus carrying passengers from Tanzania

said they could not get to Nairobi in the morning because of roadblocks and were stranded in Kajjido, a town about 75km (46 miles) from the city.

"The bus was full. Many passengers were travelling for work and business. People are now stranded and frustrated because transport has been disrupted," he told the BBC.

Abdi Suleiman, a motorist who operates in the south-eastern Kenyan border town of Taveta and sources food items from across the border in Tanzania, told the BBC that he was unable to supply them as usual since morning because of the strike.

In parts of Nairobi and elsewhere across the country, police used tear gas to disperse protesters who had blocked roads with burning tyres and barricades, amid reports they had been stopping and harassing motorists.

Nairobi police commander Issa Mohamud said six police officers were injured in the clashes, and five police vehicles and one civilian vehicle were damaged.

Ahead of the strike, the police assured Kenyans that security measures would be in place and warned against any disruptive conduct.

Mohamud said 225 people had been arrested following the protests.

The association representing transport operators had earlier urged all vehicle users, including private motorists, public transport buses (locally known as matatus) and truckers, to stay off the roads as part of a coordinated shutdown.

"This action is not only for transport operators, but for every Kenyan citizen," the Transport Sector Alliance (TSA) said in a statement.

Feature

NIGERIA'S FEDERAL ROADS

Potholes, promises, and the cost of delay

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

If you have driven from Lagos to Ibadan, Benin to Auchi, or Kaduna to Zaria in the last 18 months, you know the story. Sections of Nigeria's federal road network remain in a state of disrepair that undermines trade, raises transport costs, and costs lives. The federal road network is the backbone of Nigeria's economy. It carries over 90% of passengers and freight. Yet, for millions of Nigerians, it is a daily reminder of the gap between budget announcements and lived reality.

This article examines the current state of federal roads, why repairs stall, what government and private partners are doing, and what it will take to move from patchwork fixes to a network that works.

LET'S CONSIDER THE SCALE OF THE NETWORK

Nigeria has about 35,000 km of federal roads, out of a total road network exceeding 195,000 km. These roads connect state capitals, ports, airports, and agricultural belts. They are critical for the movement of cement, fuel, food, and manufactured goods.

The Federal Ministry of Works and the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) share responsibility. The Ministry handles construction and rehabilitation of major highways, while FERMA is mandated to maintain them. But maintenance has consistently lagged behind construction, leading to a cycle where new roads deteriorate quickly and old roads collapse.

NOW, WHERE THINGS STAND IN 2026

South West & South

The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway rehabilitation is largely complete, easing one of the country's most critical corridors. However, feeder roads and portions of the Sagamu-Benin axis remain problematic. The Benin-Warri road, a vital route for oil and gas operations, continues to suffer from delays and contractor disputes. In Edo and Delta, seasonal flooding worsens road conditions, with several communities cut off during peak rains.

South East

The Enugu-Onitsha and Enugu-Port Harcourt corridors are receiving attention, but progress is uneven. Insecurity in parts of the region has slowed contractor movement, increasing costs and timelines. Many rural federal roads remain impassable, forcing traders to use longer, costlier routes.

NORTH CENTRAL & NORTH WEST

The Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano road project is advancing in phases. When fully completed, it will cut travel time and reduce accidents on one of Nigeria's busiest highways. But the Abuja-Lokoja road and parts of the Kaduna-Zaria axis are still plagued by potholes and washouts. Security concerns along certain stretches also limit night travel and raise insurance premiums for haulage companies.

North East

Federal roads in Borno, Yobe, and



FEDERAL ROAD POTHOLE

Adamawa remain heavily impacted by both insurgency and neglect. Rebuilding here is tied directly to security stabilization and humanitarian access. Where work has resumed, it is often under military escort and with significant cost premiums.

WHY ROADS FAIL AND REPAIRS STALL

Funding Gaps

Budget allocations for road maintenance have consistently fallen short of need. The 2025 and 2026 budgets increased capital expenditure on infrastructure, but inflation, naira depreciation, and rising material costs have eroded purchasing power. A project budgeted at N50bn in 2023 may now cost N85bn.

CONTRACTOR CAPACITY AND PROCUREMENT DELAYS

Many contractors lack the equipment and cash flow to deliver at scale. Payment delays from government further weaken capacity. Procurement processes, while improved, still take months, and variation orders become battlegrounds for renegotiation.

DESIGN AND CLIMATE ISSUES

Some roads were built without adequate drainage, soil testing, or climate resilience. Heavy rains and flooding now wash away sections within months. Climate-proofing is no longer optional, but it raises costs.

SECURITY AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

Insecurity disrupts work and raises risk premiums. Community disputes over compensation and right-of-way also delay projects. Without early engagement, work stops for weeks.

THE ECONOMIC COST

Bad roads are not just an inconvenience. They raise the cost of doing business across Nigeria.

1. Transport Costs*: Haulage companies report 30-50% higher maintenance costs due to road damage. Fuel

consumption rises on rough surfaces, and tire replacement is constant.

2. Food Inflation*: Farmers in Benue, Kogi, and Kebbi lose up to 40% of perishable produce because trucks cannot reach markets on time.

3. Logistics Delays*: Ports congestion worsens when hinterland evacuation is slow. Importers pay demurrage, which is passed to consumers.

4. Accidents and Lives Lost*: Poor road conditions contribute to accidents, especially at night. The Federal Road Safety Corps consistently cites road condition as a factor in fatal crashes.

WHAT GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Highway Concessioning

The Highway Development and Management Initiative (HDMI) is bringing private capital into road maintenance through tolling and concessions. The first phases on Lagos-Ibadan and Shagamu-Benin are operational. The model aims to ensure predictable maintenance funding, but public acceptance of tolls depends on visible service delivery.

TAX CREDIT SCHEME

The Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme allows companies to fund road construction in exchange for tax credits. Dangote, BUA, and others have used this to rehabilitate critical corridors like Apapa-Oshodi-Oworonshoki and Obajana-Kabba. It has accelerated delivery but raises questions about equity and regional balance.

FERMA REFORMS

FERMA has shifted toward direct labor and performance-based contracts in some states. The goal is faster pothole patching and drainage clearing without waiting for full rehabilitation contracts. Results are mixed, with better outcomes in states with active monitoring.

DIGITAL MONITORING

The Ministry of Works has intro-

duced GIS mapping and public dashboards for project tracking. Citizens can now see project status, contractor names, and timelines. It's a step toward accountability, but coverage is not yet nationwide.

WHAT WORKS ELSEWHERE

Countries with similar challenges have made progress through three moves:

1. Ring-fenced Road Funds*: Dedicated fuel levy or road fund that cannot be diverted to other uses.

2. Performance Contracts*: Pay contractors based on road condition metrics, not just kilometers covered.

3. Maintenance First Policy*: Allocate 40-50% of road budgets to maintenance, not just new construction.

Rwanda and Morocco have used these approaches to keep core networks in good condition with smaller budgets than Nigeria's.

THE ROLE OF STATES AND LGAS

Federal roads pass through states, but coordination is weak. States often build link roads that connect to federal highways without standardizing design, leading to bottlenecks. A joint planning framework between federal, state, and LGA road agencies would reduce duplication and improve network flow.

Public-private partnerships at state level, like those in Lagos and Rivers, show that sub-national governments can deliver when they have fiscal space and political will.

What Needs to Happen Next

1. Increase and Protect Maintenance Funding Maintenance is cheaper than reconstruction. A policy that mandates at least 40% of road capital vote for maintenance would break the rebuild-collapse cycle.

2. Accelerate Concessions with Safeguards Expand HDMI but include clear service standards, toll caps, and independent monitoring. Transparency on revenue use will

build public trust.

3. Strengthen Contractor Financing Create a road contractor financing window through development banks to reduce reliance on government payment cycles. This keeps equipment working and crews employed.

4. Climate-Resilient Design

Update design standards to account for heavier rainfall and higher temperatures. Invest in drainage, culverts, and erosion control upfront.

5. Community Engagement Early Resolve compensation and right-of-way issues before contracts are awarded. Use local labor where possible to build buy-in.

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS

Nigerians are no longer asking for mega-projects alone. They want roads that work daily. A 5km stretch fixed properly and maintained matters more than a 100km road that fails after one rainy season.

The media, civil society, and lawmakers have a role in tracking delivery. Constituency projects can help, but they must align with national network priorities to avoid fragmentation.

NOW, MY HUMBLE CONCLUSION

Nigeria's federal roads are a mirror of governance. Where planning, funding, and oversight align, delivery happens. Where they don't, potholes become metaphors for deeper dysfunction.

The good news is that the tools exist: tax credit schemes, concessions, digital tracking, and performance contracts. What's needed now is consistent execution, political discipline to prioritize maintenance, and public pressure to keep projects on track.

If the next 24 months focus on fixing what exists before starting new projects, Nigeria can turn its road network from a liability into an economic asset. For traders in Onitsha, farmers in Kano, and commuters in Lagos, that change can't come soon enough.

Taxation and the Banking Sector: Revenue Drive, Compliance Burden, and the Customer on the Edge

CLARETH SOLOMON

Nigeria's fiscal position in 2026 remains tight. Oil revenue is volatile, borrowing space is limited, and the federal government is leaning harder on non-oil revenue to fund the budget. At the center of that push are the banks. As the most formalized and digitized part of the economy, the banking sector is both a target for taxation and a channel for collecting it.

The result is a complex dynamic: higher revenue expectations from government, tighter compliance demands from regulators and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), and growing pressure on banks to pass costs to customers without eroding confidence.

The Revenue Imperative, Nigeria's tax-to-GDP ratio stood at 10.8% in 2024, up from 8.4% in 2022, according to the Federal Ministry of Finance. The target is 18% by 2027. To get there, the government is broadening the tax base, automating collection, and closing loopholes.

BANKS ARE CRITICAL TO THIS STRATEGY FOR THREE REASONS:

They hold the data: Through BVN, NIN linkage, and transaction records, banks have visibility into income flows that tax authorities previously could not access.

They are collection agents: Withholding tax, VAT on electronic transactions, and stamp duties are often collected at source by banks.

They are taxpayers themselves: Banks contribute significantly to Company Income Tax (CIT), Education Tax, and other levies.

In 2025, the banking sector paid over N1.2 trillion in taxes and levies, making it one of the top contributing sectors. The expectation for 2026 is higher, driven by improved profitability in the sector and new levies introduced in the Finance Act.

New Taxes and Levies Affecting Banks, Windfall Tax on Forex Gains

Introduced in 2024 and extended into 2026, the windfall tax targets extraordinary gains from naira devaluation on foreign currency holdings. Banks that recorded large FX revaluation gains faced a one-off tax of 50%. The policy was aimed at equity - ensuring that banks did not profit disproportionately from currency adjustment while households bore inflation costs.

The policy achieved revenue but created tension. Banks argued that the gains were unrealized accounting adjustments, not cash, and that taxing them reduced capital buffers needed for lending.

ELECTRONIC MONEY TRANSFER LEVY (EMTL)

EMTL of N50 on transfers above N10,000 remains in place. It is collected by banks and remitted to FIRS. In 2025, EMTL generated over N320bn. While the rate is small per transaction, the volume makes it significant. Customers complain about "double charges" when combined with bank transfer fees, but government defends it as a broad-based, low-rate tax.

The 0.5% cybersecurity levy on electronic transactions, introduced under the Cybercrime Act amendment, was suspended in 2024 after public backlash. It has not been reintroduced, but the framework remains, meaning it could return if revenue needs intensify.



Company Income Tax and Education Tax are in the front burner too.

Banks remain subject to 30% CIT and 3% Education Tax. With banks reporting stronger 2025 profits due to higher interest income, these payments are set to rise in 2026.

It is clear the Compliance Pressure is Rising.

FIRS and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) have increased scrutiny on financial transactions. The push for cashless payments, driven by the Central Bank of Nigeria, has created more digital trails. That helps tax compliance but also increases reporting burden on banks.

There are Key compliance demands and they now include Automated Exchange of Information*: Banks must report high-value transactions, dormant accounts, and suspicious activity in real time.

Tax Identification Number (TIN) Enforcement: Account opening and high-value transactions require TIN. This has pushed more informal businesses into the tax net.

For banks with foreign parents or subsidiaries, FIRS is conducting deeper audits to ensure profits are not shifted out of Nigeria.

The cost of compliance is not trivial. Banks have invested heavily in RegTech, AML systems, and staff training. A mid-tier bank now spends 8-12% of its operating expense on compliance functions, up from 4-6% in 2020.

HIGHER TAXES AND COMPLIANCE COSTS AFFECT BANKS IN THREE WAYS:

When a significant portion of FX gains or profits is taxed away, banks have less retained earnings to grow capital. This limits lending capacity at a time when SMEs and manufacturers need credit.

To maintain return on equity, banks adjust lending rates. In 2026, average lending rates hover around 28-32% for

corporate loans. SMEs face even higher rates. Customers feel the pinch, and credit growth slows.

Banks are accelerating digital channels to reduce cost-to-serve. Branch closures continue, especially in low-traffic areas. Product fees are being reviewed, with more banks introducing account maintenance fees, SMS alerts charges, and tiered service fees.

For the average customer, the impact is felt in two places: fees and access.

Every transfer above N10,000 attracts N50 EMTL. SMS alerts, USSD sessions, and card maintenance fees add up. For a trader making 20 transfers a month, that's N1,000 in EMTL alone, before bank charges.

To avoid fees, some customers keep money outside the banking system. This undermines financial inclusion goals. POS agents and mobile money operators are seeing increased cash activity in rural areas where bank branches are distant.

Banks argue that fees are necessary to cover costs. FIRS argues that without broad-based collection, government cannot fund roads, schools, and security. The customer is caught in the middle.

WHAT ABOUT SMES AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

SMEs are the most affected by the tax-bank nexus. Many operate on thin margins and cannot absorb higher lending rates or compliance costs.

The government's approach has been mixed. On one hand, the tax amnesty window for MSMEs in 2025 brought 400,000 new taxpayers into the system. On the other hand, aggressive enforcement on small businesses without clear thresholds has created fear and resistance.

Banks are trying to bridge the gap with digital lending products that use transaction data for credit scoring. But high policy rates and tax costs make these loans expensive. Interest rates of

35-40% are common for unsecured SME loans, limiting uptake.

There is a Regulatory Balancing Act.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and FIRS are not always aligned. CBN wants lower lending rates and deeper financial inclusion. FIRS wants more revenue and compliance.

In 2026, the coordination has improved through the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms. The committee's recommendations include:

- Harmonizing multiple taxes to reduce multiplicity.

- Exempting transactions below N25,000 from EMTL to protect low-income users.

- Providing tax credits for banks that lend to priority sectors like agriculture and manufacturing.

Implementation is ongoing, but the direction is clearer: reduce nuisance taxes, focus on high-value compliance, and use technology to lower collection cost.

THERE ARE LESSONS FROM OTHER MARKETS:

Kenya and Ghana have faced similar issues. Kenya's mobile money tax in 2021 reduced transaction volumes by 15% in three months before rates were adjusted. Ghana's e-levy faced public resistance and was reduced from 1.5% to 1% in 2023.

The lesson is clear: tax design matters. High rates on digital transactions can push activity back into cash, defeating the purpose. Broad base, low rate, and visible public service delivery create compliance.

What ought to be done? Clarify Tax Policy Communication.

Many customers do not understand why EMTL exists or where it goes. FIRS and banks need joint public education campaigns showing how revenue is used.

Exempting transactions below N25,000 from EMTL would reduce friction for low-income users without significantly cutting revenue.

Tax credits for banks that meet lending targets in agriculture, manufacturing, and renewable energy can align revenue goals with growth goals.

Multiple agencies asking for the same data increases cost. A single digital portal for tax, AML, and CBN reporting would cut duplication.

FIRS has improved e-filing, but dispute resolution is still slow. A faster, transparent appeals process would improve trust.

Taxation and banking are two sides of the same coin. A healthy banking sector mobilizes savings and funds growth. A fair tax system funds public goods and reduces inequality. When the balance is wrong, both suffer.

Nigeria cannot tax its way to prosperity without growth. But it cannot grow without funding infrastructure, security, and education. Banks are central to that equation.

The challenge for 2026-2027 is to make the system fairer, simpler, and less punitive. That means protecting small users, taxing large gains transparently, and ensuring that revenue translates into visible public services.

If that happens, compliance will rise, trust will return, and the banking sector can play its role as an engine of growth rather than a collection point alone.

The relationship between taxation and banking in Nigeria is at a turning point. Revenue needs are real, and banks are the most efficient collection channel. But overreach risks killing the formalization gains of the last decade.

The next phase must be about precision: tax the right base, at the right rate, with minimal friction. For customers, that means fewer surprises at the ATM. For banks, it means a stable policy environment to plan and lend. For government, it means more revenue without stifling the economy.

The next budget and Finance Act will test whether that balance can be struck.

FEATURE

Female journalists in Edo participate In two-day workshop on women, peace and security



The participants in two-day workshop on women, Peace and Security

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

BENIN CITY, Edo State – No fewer than 42 female journalists and media practitioners from across Edo State have completed a two-day intensive workshop on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and conflict-sensitive reporting.

The training, held in Benin City, was organized by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)-Nigeria in partnership with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) and supported by Global Affairs Canada. It aimed to strengthen the capacity of journalists in ethical, gender-sensitive, and conflict-sensitive reporting while advancing the WPS agenda in Nigeria.

Participants, including some male journalists, were taken through sessions on UN Security Council Resolu-

tions 1325 and 2250, survivor-centered reporting on gender-based violence, trauma-informed interviewing, and strategies to counter misinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Facilitator Adesewa Osa-Uwagie Esq. urged journalists to move beyond conventional conflict reporting to adopt approaches that promote dialogue, inclusion, accountability, and sustainable peace.

Speaking at the opening session, WANEP-Nigeria National Coordinator, Dr. Bridget Osakwe, highlighted the media's role in shaping public narratives and amplifying the voices of women and youths in governance and conflict prevention.

Representing the Edo State First Lady, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, Mrs. Amen Ajayi stressed that “the stories told, the language used, and the information shared can either build peace or increase tension.” She com-

mended the organizers and reaffirmed the First Lady's office commitment to promoting peace, inclusion, and opportunities for women and youths.

Also speaking, Hon. Mrs. Eugenia Abdallah, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, represented by Comrade Daisy Osunde, praised media practitioners for shaping public opinion and promoting social cohesion. She urged responsible use of media platforms to foster peace and unity.

On his part, the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kasim Afegbua, said the Ministry would continue to support initiatives that advance peacebuilding and encourage the active participation of women and youths in governance.

Represented by the Director of Orientation in the Ministry, Mrs. Rose Imonikhe, the Commissioner described the media as a vital instrument for social transformation and public en-

lightenment. He maintained that journalists play a strategic role in shaping public opinion and fostering peaceful coexistence, adding that the Ministry remains committed to supporting programmes that strengthen peace and inclusion across the state. Speaking during the event, the Commissioner reiterated government's readiness to collaborate with stakeholders working towards sustainable peace and responsible information management.

In a goodwill message, *Comrade Habiba Sam-Ibrahim, Chairperson of the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) Edo State Chapter*, thanked WANEP for the opportunity to train members. She noted that NAWOJ and WANEP share the same ideals in women advocacy, development, and progress, and enjoined the organization to sustain its worthwhile strides in advancing gender equality and peacebuilding.

A key highlight was the induction of participants into a media fellowship tasked with supporting the implementation of Edo State's Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 (2026–2030), developed in line with Governor Monday Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda. Participants also engaged in practical story framing and pitch sessions to develop peacebuilding-focused content for print, broadcast, and digital platforms.

At the close of the workshop, participants committed to increasing media content on WPS, GBV prevention, youth inclusion, and peacebuilding within their organizations.

WANEP-Nigeria Gender, Women Peace and Security Officer, Ms. Mary Nkifan Owor-Agbor, expressed optimism that the training would strengthen responsible journalism and enhance the visibility of women and youths as critical actors in peacebuilding across Edo State and Nigeria.

Man docked for allegedly stealing his neighbour's ₦425,000

ABUJA

A 19-year-old man, Okon Wisdom, was on Monday docked in a Life Camp Chief Magistrates' Court in Abuja for allegedly stealing his neighbour's ₦425,000.

The police charged Wisdom of Catholic Church Last Gate Karmo with criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and theft.

The defendant however, Pleaded not guilty to the charges preferred against him by the police.

The prosecutor, Charity Nwachukwu, told the court that the complainant, Mr Okpe Henry, who lives in Karmo, Abuja,

reported the matter at the Karmo Police Station on May 5.

Nwachukwu said the defendant conspired with others, now at large, stole the money from the complainant's POS shop.

He said that they also stole a Tecno Spark 10C cell phone worth ₦190,000.

Nwachukwu said during police investigation the defendant confessed to the crime and all efforts made to recover the stolen items, failed.

The prosecutor informed the court that the offence contravened the provisions of Sections 97, 312 and 317 of the Penal Code

The defence counsel, Mrs Lilian Ibrahim, made an oral bail application citing Section

36(5) of the 1999 Constitution and Section 158, 162 and 168 of ACJA 2015.

Ibrahim urged the court to grant the defendant bail on a more liberal terms, adding that the defendant would not jump bail or interfere with further investigation.

The prosecution did not oppose the bail application made by defence counsel.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Musa Jobbo, admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of ₦500,000 with one surety in like sum.

Jobbo ordered that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction and adjourned the case until July 13 for hearing.

Electrician, 44, docked over alleged ₦19.9 million fraud

IBADAN

An electrician, Seun Temitope, who allegedly paraded himself as a staff member of the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC), was on Monday arraigned over alleged ₦19.9 million fraud.

The defendant, whose address was not disclosed, is standing trial before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan on a four-count charge bordering on fraud, stealing, conversion and impersonation.

The prosecutor, ASP Foluke Adedosu, alleged that the

defendant committed the offences between Oct. 20, 2025 and April 25, at Akitiko, Iyana Church area of Ibadan.

Adedosu said the defendant allegedly presented himself as an IBEDC staff member to carry out the fraud.

She told the court that the defendant obtained ₦19.9 million from one Omotoso Ahmed under the pretext of helping him procure a transformer and a metre for his shop complex.

The prosecutor alleged that the money was paid into the defendant's UBA account.

She said the defendant failed to procure the items and

converted the money to his personal use.

Adedosu said the offences contravened Sections 390 (9), 419 and 484 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

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

The Magistrate, Mrs A. T. Oyediji, granted the defendant bail in the sum of ₦5 million with two sureties in like sum.

Oyediji ordered that the sureties must be property owners within the court's jurisdiction.

She adjourned the case until June 22 for hearing.

Strike actions and the future of education in Nigeria



THE PROTESTERS

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

Education is one of the greatest gifts that any country can offer its citizens because it is the foundation of every successful nation. It is very important such that it helps to build people who will serve as major assets to the country and contribute to its national development, yet recurrent strike actions become the barricade that threatens the future of students. In countries where strike actions are predominant, i.e. Nigeria, lecturers and educational workers suspend academic activities for a period of time which can last for about a week, two weeks, or more, which persistently affect academic activities. While the strike action is a smart move from them in order to force the government to take action for better welfare, improved educational standards, and remuneration, students on the other hand suffer the gruesome consequences that it projects, making its objective of providing quality education for its citizens appear in a false light.

Strike actions are organized refusals by workers or employees to continue working in order to protest against certain issues or demand better conditions. These actions usually occur when negotiations between workers' associations and the government fail. Strike actions are occurrences that do not spring up out of the blue without an impending cause that was left unattended or unaddressed.

Poor salaries of staff is one of the major causes of strike action which is further fueled by the reality of the economic hardship facing the country. Most of these lecturers have families

to cater for, accommodation and other bills to settle, as well as transportation expenses to the location where they lecture. The poor salaries of these people spark a sense of financial insecurity in them which results in them transferring their frustration to students who are oblivious of what they are going through. It also has a way of distracting them from their duties.

For instance, they would not be willing to give their all in transmitting knowledge to the students because they lack the motivation to do so.

Another cause of strike actions is unpaid allowance. Allowances are meant to serve as incentives which ought to support the main salary that is being paid. But, it is rather unfortunate that not only are their salaries below the standard and delayed in terms of payment, allowances that would have served as a means to ease their burden in hard times are being withheld by those who ought to do the needful, and it would not be surprising to know that the allowance has been disbursed, but is in the hands of corrupt government officials.

Aside from unpaid allowance, poor educational funding has led to the occurrence of strike actions especially in Nigeria where there are limited staff, dilapidated structures, few and inconvenient classrooms, and absence of modern illustrative materials for effective learning, and many more have limited the quality of learning among students and increased the workload on lecturers. For instance, there are situations where a lecturer especially in Federal Universities might be told to lecture students, which would have been much easier if there were more

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If the issue of strike actions is not properly addressed and curtailed, the country has a number of consequences to contend with, and in many occasions they are not prepared to handle the aftermath.

hands to teach as well.

Government neglect is also a major contribution to strike action especially in Nigeria which comes in the form of poor funding of public institutions, delayed payment of salaries and allowance, inadequate provision of basic facilities, absence of staff workshops, etc. This trend has made lecturers not feel valued, thus, they have resorted to strike actions to demand better working conditions and accountability. If the issue of strike actions is not properly addressed and curtailed, the country has a number of consequences to contend with, and in many occasions they are not prepared to handle the aftermath.

One of the major consequences of strike actions is academic disruption. Due to the inability to strictly follow the academic calendar which was disrupted due to strike actions, a lot of students will be faced with ugly experiences like delay in graduation, incomplete syllabus, loss of motivation to read and study their books, which can also lead to poor academic performance.

Also, students are on the verge of entertaining frustration and discouragement in their lives. This is because the prolonged stay at home will become worrisome and a burden which will begin to cause mental stress, anxiety about the future, depression, frustration, and loss of motivation.

Furthermore, some students might be drawn into social vices. The government fights tooth and nail in order to put an end to the vices in the society, what if there are strike actions?

How will the society look like? The country is at the verge of breeding students who are involved in cybercrime, drug abuse, gambling, unwanted pregnancies, cultism, and hooliganism, etc.

In addition, strike actions can lead to the exodus of bright minds out of the country. Some parents who are financially buoyant can decide to send their children to study abroad due to the disruptions that affect their academic calendar, thereby affecting their expected year of graduation. Lecturers are not also left out among those involved in relocating overseas to take

up jobs where they receive higher pay and are given certain privileges, cared for, and supported unlike in their home country. As a result of this, competent lecturers and teachers who are good at transmitting knowledge eventually become scarce, leaving the students at the mercy of the average ones.

Loss of education quality is another factor affected by strike actions. The crippling effect of strike actions will lead to prolonged suspension of academic activities and stay at home which will eventually result in a rushed academic session upon resumption. Students will read not with the intent to necessarily gain knowledge, but just so they can pass examinations. In such situations, it will reduce their understanding of what they ought to learn and assimilate.

Despite the devastating effects of strike actions, certain measures when put in place can help reduce their occurrence which include timely payment of salaries, improved funding for education, prioritizing students' welfare, better dialogue and understanding between government and unions as well as implementing policies that will prevent prolonged shutdowns of academic activities.

In conclusion, in as much as strike actions are conducted to agitate for better educational conditions, unions and the government must be mindful because the repeated occurrence places students at a disadvantage. Hence, this is a call for the government and unions to proffer lasting solutions that will put an end to strike actions and promote a better education system in the country.

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

Segun Odegbami pays emotional tribute to Okala on 75th birthday

Nigerian football legend Segun Odegbami has paid glowing tribute to former Green Eagles goalkeeper Emmanuel Okala on the occasion of his 75th birthday, describing him as the “safest pair of goalkeeping hands on the African continent.” Soccer

In an emotional LinkedIn post on Sunday, Odegbami joined other admirers in celebrating the former Nigeria national football team star, fondly known as

“Babuje,” “Man Mountain” and “Tallest” during his illustrious playing career.

Odegbami and Okala shared a fierce but respectful rivalry in Nigerian club football during the 1970s, with Odegbami starring for Shooting Stars Sports Club, then known as IICC Shooting Stars, while Okala was the commanding figure in goal for Enugu Rangers. The pair were also teammates in the national team setup, then known as the Green Eagles.

Former rivals and teammates during their playing days: from left, Samuel Ojebode, captain of Shooting Stars Sports Club and left-back of the Green Eagles; Christian Chukwu, captain of Enugu Rangers and the Green Eagles; Segun Odegbami, the attacking livewire of Shooting Stars and the Green Eagles; and Emmanuel Okala, the legendary “Rock of Gibraltar” for Rangers and Nigeria’s Green Eagles.

“Before this day ends, I wish

to add my humble voice to the chorus of congratulations on the 75th anniversary of the birth of ‘Man Mountain’, ‘Tallest’, Chief Emmanuel Okala, MON,” Odegbami wrote.

He praised Okala’s extraordinary achievements in African football, recalling that the towering goalkeeper became the first Nigerian footballer to be named Africa’s Best Player by the African Sports Journalists Union. Soccer



COAL CITY BLAZERS

Coal City blazers defeat Edo beads 74-58 in NPBL 2026 opener

Coal City Blazers began their 2026 Nigeria Basketball Premier League campaign on a winning note after defeating Edo Beads 74-58 in their opening game at the Benin Centre on Day One of the competition.

The encounter, which was the second game of the day, saw Coal City Blazers execute their game plan effectively against an Edo Beads side that struggled to convert several scoring opportunities.

Coal City took control of key moments in the game, capitalising on Edo Beads’ missed chances and defensive lapses to build a comfortable lead.

Despite flashes of brilliance from Edo Beads, the Enugu-based side maintained composure throughout the contest and dominated both ends of the court to secure the 16-point victory.

The result gives Coal City Blazers an early boost in the race for a strong start to the 2026 NPBL season.

African Track Championships: Osaretin wins 2 gold as Team Nigeria finish 3rd

Nigeria’s Junior Women champion, Osaretin Godwin yesterday won two gold medals to push her total haul to six gold including four personal and two team gold medals to help Team Nigeria finish third behind South Africa and Egypt as the curtains were drawn on the 2026 African Track Cycling Championship in Abuja

Nigeria’s Junior Women champion, Osaretin Godwin yesterday won two gold medals to push her total haul to six gold including four personal and two team gold medals to help Team Nigeria finish third behind South Africa and Egypt as the curtains were drawn in the 2026 African Track Cycling Championship in Abuja.

Team Nigeria’s two gold, two silver and two bronze medals on the last day of the 5-day championship held at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium Velodrome took their total to nine gold and silver each and eleven bronze, bringing their total to 29 medals, two more than second placed Team Egypt who won one more gold medal than Nigeria but with eight silver and 9 bronze medals.

Algeria placed fourth with three gold, 12 silver and five bronze medals while Benin Republic finished fifth with two silver and a bronze, leaving Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cote d’Ivoire without a medal. Team South Africa garnered a total haul of 44 medals, consisting of 19 gold, 10 silver and nine bronze medals.



African Cycling Championship Osaretin Godwin Shines

Weightlifting: NSC applauds Team Nigeria’s remarkable Weightlifting Achievement

The National Sports Commission has congratulated Nigeria’s weightlifting contingent following their impressive outing at the 2026 African Senior Weightlifting Championship in Ismailia, where Team Nigeria secured a remarkable total of 29 medals.

Nigeria concluded the continental competition with 14 gold, 13 silver and two bronze medals, reaffirming the country’s status as one of Africa’s leading forces in weightlifting. Nigeria national team.

Chairman of the National Sports Commission, Shehu Dikko, praised the athletes for their resilience, discipline and outstanding representation of the country on the continental stage.

“This performance is a strong

statement that Nigerian sports is moving in the right direction. Our athletes have continued to show courage, discipline and excellence whenever they compete internationally. Winning 29 medals at the African Championship is not only a victory for weightlifting but also a proud

achievement for the nation,” Dikko stated. Nigerian athlete profiles

Director-General of the commission, Bukola Olopade, described the performance as another indication of Nigeria’s growing strength across multiple sporting disciplines.



WEIGHTLIFTING TEAM

Team Nigeria bags 4 gold medals at senior Athletics Championships



TEAM NIGERIA

Team Nigeria won another gold medal on the final day of the Senior Athletics Championships in Accra Ghana, on Sunday night.

The quartet of Esther Okon, Toheebat Jimoh, Jecinter Lawrence and Patient Okon-George ran a dominant race, clocking a time of 3:29.25 to secure gold medal in the 4x400m women relay.

The ladies dominated from start to finish leading their op-

ponents with an unreachable distance to secure team Nigeria’s fourth gold of the championships.

The quartet led by veteran patient Okon-George won the race with a 30 metres distance ahead of other teams, leaving Ethiopia 2nd and Kenya in 3rd place.

Team Nigeria had an impressive outing at the 24th Senior Athletics Championships in Accra Ghana, ending with 4 golds and 8 other medals.

Nigeria hosts successful African Cycling Championships

Nigeria has been commended for successfully hosting the 2026 African Track Cycling Championships and the African Para-Cycling Championships, which came to an end on Sunday at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium Velodrome in Abuja.

The week-long championships, held from May 11 to May 17, featured the 12th Confederation of African Cycling (CAC) Track Cycling Championships and the 3rd CAC Para-Cycling Championships, attracting athletes from across the continent.

Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Shehu Dikko, praised athletes, organisers and officials for delivering a successful competition and described all participants as winners.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Dikko applauded the dedication and resilience dis-

played throughout the championships while reaffirming Nigeria’s commitment to sports development and continental sporting excellence.

“To all the cyclists who participated in the championships, everyone is a winner,” he said.

He also congratulated Nigerian cyclists on their impressive performances and expressed confidence that they would continue to achieve greater success in future international competitions.

Dikko thanked participating countries, officials and technical teams for contributing to the smooth organisation of the event on behalf of President Bola Tinubu.

Also speaking, Secretary-General of the Cycling Federation of Nigeria (CFN), Joel Akinluwa, described the championships as a major success despite minor organisational challenges.



AFRICAN CYCLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Building the game from the grassroots: CFF champions community football ownership

The Community Football Forum (CFF) Conference, held on May 16, 2026, in Badagry, Lagos State, delivered a powerful message on the future of Nigerian football with its theme: "Building Community Football Ownership, Football Culture in Nigeria." The event brought together key stakeholders, traditional leaders, football administrators, and enthusiasts, all united by a shared vision to strengthen the grassroots foundation of the game.

At the heart of the conference was a call to action—repositioning football as a community-driven asset rather than a top-down enterprise. The forum emphasized that sustainable football development in Nigeria must begin at the local level, where talent is discovered, nurtured, and supported by the very communities it represents.

A major highlight of the event was the address delivered by Nelson Ine, Executive Director of GTI. In his remarks, he underscored the importance of structured investment and private sector involvement in grassroots football. He noted that community ownership fosters accountability, pride, and long-term sustainability, adding that when communities take responsibility for their clubs and football structures, the game becomes a true reflection of their identity and aspirations.

The conference facilitation featured an engaging and insightful session led by former international footballer Austin Popo. Drawing from his experience on and off the pitch, Popo delivered a compelling presentation on the need for community ownership of football. He traced the historical evolution of football in Nigeria, highlighting how local engagement and cultural attachment once played a central role in the growth of the sport. According to him, rebuilding that connection is critical to restoring passion, discipline, and a thriving football ecosystem across the country.



SAMSON SIASIA

LADAN BOSSO

DANIEL AMOKACHI

Serving as the Father of the Day was His Royal Highness, Oba Oyekan Adekanmi Olufemiloye, the Alapa of Apa Kingdom in Badagry. The monarch's presence underscored the cultural significance of football within the community and the vital role traditional institutions can play in promoting unity and youth development through sports.

Also in attendance was the Executive Chairman of Badagry Local Government, Babatunde Hunpe, who was ably represented by the Supervisor

for Sports, Musiliu. The representative reaffirmed the local government's commitment to supporting grassroots sports initiatives and fostering youth engagement through structured football programs, Hon Rauf Yamren was the chief of the conference. Also present at the auspicious occasion was the CAC of Nigeria customs service As Kaila abley represented DC Dala who is also in charge of sporting activities at the Same command post. DCG Jibo Bello, Director of badagry United football club

The event witnessed the presence of eminent dignitaries, community leaders, and palace chiefs, all of whom lent their voices to the conversation around football development. Their collective participation reinforced the idea that football is not merely a sport, but a social tool capable of driving community cohesion, economic opportunities, and youth empowerment.

A major feature of the conference was the presentation of platinum membership cards and mufflers to 12

distinguish football fans at the level. The membership categories and levies was also mentioned.

In conclusion, the CFF Conference in Apa kingdom Badagry succeeded in reigniting the conversation around grassroots football and the urgent need for community ownership. As stakeholders continue to explore pathways for growth, the conference stands as a timely reminder that the future of Nigerian football lies in its communities—where passion lives, talents are born, and the true spirit of the game thrives.

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ITTF Africa President Oshodi seeks financial support for Aruna, Assar, others

The President of ITTF Africa, Wahid Oshodi, has called for increased financial backing and stronger corporate partnerships to

drive the growth of table tennis across the continent.

Oshodi made the appeal during a strategic meeting with officials from the Inter-

national Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) technical and competitions departments in London, stressing that Africa's abundance of talent must

be matched with sustained investment to achieve global success.

According to him, funding remains a critical factor in developing players, coaches, officials, and the overall table tennis ecosystem in Africa.

"Success takes so much, and we need major corporate bodies to join us on this journey," Oshodi stated, reiterating the federation's commitment to expanding support programmes across its regions.

He also praised Egypt's consistent performances on the international stage, describing the North African nation as a model for excellence in African table tennis.

Among the standout performers he highlighted were

Omar Assar and Quadri Aruna, alongside women's stars Dina Meshref and Hana Goda.

Oshodi reserved special commendation for Egypt's women's team, who narrowly missed out on a historic quarterfinal berth against Romania.

"Especially the women I must personally thank the team for their excellent fight in London. This is what truly matters: the passion and effort they put into their craft.

"We're extremely proud of their achievement and how they continue to shine a light on the continent," he said.

The ITTF Africa president further outlined plans to strengthen development structures, including equipment support initiatives, grants, and

collaborative training programmes with China aimed at nurturing emerging talents and improving coaching standards.

He emphasised that Africa must continue to build a sustainable pipeline capable of producing more world-class players.

"We're not stopping with rebuilding. We believe there are thousands of talents across Africa. Look at Goda today she represents both the present and the future.

"We're constantly strategising with partners, federations, and ITTF on how to take our game to the next level, but these successes require huge financial support, which we will continue to seek," Oshodi added.



The President of ITTF Africa, Wahid Oshodi, during a strategic meeting with officials.

Sports



Glasgow 2026 set to deliver first-ever indoor Commonwealth Games opening ceremony

Organisers of the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games have officially announced ticket details for the highly anticipated Opening Ceremony, with registration for the public ballot opening on Monday, May 18.

The ceremony, scheduled for July 23, 2026, will take place at the iconic OVO Hydro and is expected to launch what organisers describe as the biggest sporting event in the United Kingdom in 2026.

In a historic first for the Commonwealth Games, the Opening Ceremony will be staged entirely indoors, transforming the Hydro arena into an immersive entertainment venue for athletes, fans and performers from across the Commonwealth.

The ceremony, presented by Longines, will officially begin 10 days of sporting competition and welcome athletes from 74 nations and territories participating in the Games. Organisers revealed that the production will feature a local cast of more than 600 performers alongside headline entertainment acts, with the show designed to celebrate the culture, creativity and global influence of Glasgow, Scotland and the wider Commonwealth.

Due to the expected high demand for tickets, Glasgow 2026 organisers have introduced a dedicated ticket draw system aimed at ensuring fair public access. Fans interested in attending the ceremony must register online between May 18 and May 26 to enter the ballot. Successful applicants will be selected randomly and notified on June 1 before ticket sales officially begin on June 2.

Ticket prices for adults range from £45 to £195 across four categories, while concession tickets will also be available. Chair of Glasgow 2026, George Black, said the ceremony would represent a defining moment for the city and the Commonwealth movement.

"The Opening Ceremony marks the moment we welcome athletes from across the Commonwealth to Glasgow. Gathered in the Hydro, we will share a story of how this incredible city has contributed to the world," he said.

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GLASGOW 2026 STADIUM

S/Africa lauds Nigeria's readiness for 2026 Commonwealth Fencing Championships

Louise Lombard, the President, Fencing Federation of South Africa (FFSA), has commended Nigeria's capacity to successfully host the 2026 Commonwealth Fencing Championships.

Lombard gave the commendation in a statement issued to newsmen on Sunday in Lagos, ahead of the championships scheduled to hold in August.

She expressed confidence in Nigeria's ability to organise a world-class event, citing the country's experience in hosting international fencing competitions.

Lombard, an administrator, Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE) referee and former Secretary-General of the FFSA, said she had witnessed the steady growth of fencing in Nigeria over the years.

"They have continued to grow and improve, so I expect it to be a quality event," she said.

According to her, the championships will provide an important platform for emerging athletes, especially those making their international debut.

"We are hoping for a competitive event where some of our fencers will gain their first international experience in a positive environment.

"However, African fencing still faced challenges of recognition from established fencing nations.

"Unfortunately, many leading fencing countries are still ignorant of the growth and potential of African fencing and fail to show up and see what we can do.

"This is in spite of the fact that Nigeria has successfully hosted international competitions in the past," she said.

She expressed optimism that

the championships would further showcase Africa's progress in fencing to the global community.

Lombard disclosed that South Africa planned to send a large delegation to Lagos, with veteran fencers particularly eager to participate in the tournament.

While noting that winning medals remained important, she stressed that exposure and confidence-building for young athletes were top priorities.

"I will admit that medals are

always a plus, but we will have many new international fencers, so a positive experience is the primary goal," she said.

Lombard also identified the forthcoming Youth Olympics in Africa as another opportunity for the continent to demonstrate its ability to host major sporting events.

"We have definitely seen new faces at competitions, so the growth looks good.

"We just need to keep showing

Cricket: Sharks crush Dolphins to revive Super League campaign

Southern Sharks defeated Western Dolphins by 48 runs on Sunday, bouncing back strongly from their opening defeat in the Nigeria Super League.

The match was played at the

Tafawa Balewa Square Cricket Oval in Lagos.

Southern Sharks, after winning the toss, elected to bat and posted an imposing 176 for seven in 20 overs.

Iselele Odion Evangel led

the assault with 54 off 31 balls, striking 11 boundaries in a fearless innings.

Kenneth Boniface added 47 from 25 deliveries, while Akhigbe Miracle contributed 28 to lift the innings.

Evangel said, "We knew we had to respond strongly after our first game, and everyone contributed."

Western Dolphins bowlers Udekwe Chiemelie and Monday Elijah claimed two wickets each but struggled to contain the scoring.

Chasing 177, Dolphins lost wickets early and never fully recovered in their pursuit.



SHARKS AND DOLPHINS

Cricket: Central Eagles claim last-ball victory over Elephants

Central Eagles defeated Eastern Elephants by one run in a thrilling Nigeria Super League encounter decided on the final delivery on Sunday.

The match at Tafawa Balewa Square Cricket Oval kept players and spectators on edge throughout.

Sent in to bat, Central Eagles posted 157 for four in their allotted 20 overs.

Selam Salau starred with 83 from 61 deliveries, hitting four boundaries and seven sixes.

The Eagles lost Happy Bagshaw early, but Mohammed Moshood and Emmanuel Boniface Oche steadied the innings with a composed partnership.

Salau rotated the strike smartly and punished loose deliveries to maintain momentum.

Useni Prosper added late fire-power, smashing an unbeaten 22 from nine balls.

Eastern Elephants began brightly, with Paul Pam and Rahmon Ali showing attacking intent.

However, disciplined spells from Ifeanyi Uboh and Azeez Warees slowed the scoring rate.

Ipoli Victor revived the chase with a brilliant 52 from 35 balls.

His aggressive stroke play brought Eastern Elephants back into contention.

The match entered a tense finish as Eastern Elephants chased victory in the closing overs.

Central Eagles held their nerve with tight bowling and crucial run-outs. Eastern Elephants finished on 156 for nine, falling just one run short.



EASTERN ELEPHANTS

CAF confirms Senegal as host of 2026 beach soccer AFCON



CAF BEACH SOCCER AFRICA CUP

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has officially confirmed Senegal as the host nation for the 2026 CAF Beach Soccer Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), following approval by its Executive Committee.

The decision underscores CAF's confidence in Senegal's proven capacity to stage top-level international competitions, while also acknowledging the nation's significant role in the development of beach soccer across the continent.

Senegal remains the most successful team in the history of the

competition, boasting a record five titles.

The West Africans are also the defending champions, having won the last five consecutive editions, including the 2024 tournament held in Egypt.

The 2026 edition will feature eight of Africa's leading beach soccer nations, with teams also battling for qualification spots to the 2027 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup.

Senegal previously hosted the tournament in 2021, further strengthening its credentials as a reliable host for major continental events.

FEATURE



Agriculture in Nigeria: Production gains, post-harvest losses, and path to food security

RAYMOND OSOGBE AND IJEOMA UMEH

Food inflation eased slightly in mid-2026, but it remains the single biggest pressure on Nigerian households. Rice, maize, tomatoes, and poultry all cost more than they did two years ago. Yet, paradoxically, Nigeria is producing more food than at any point in the last decade.

The gap between production and affordability comes down to one word: losses. Post-harvest losses, logistic breakdowns, insecurity, and weak market linkages mean that up to 40% of what farmers grow never reaches a consumer's plate. Fixing that is the next frontier for agriculture policy.

Where production is rising, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security reports that output in key staples has grown steadily since 2023.

Research says Rice, the household Paddy, has its production cross 9 million metric tons in 2025, up from 7.1m in 2022. Kebbi, Ebonyi, and Kano remain the top producing states. Milling capacity has also expanded, with over 60 integrated mills now operational under the Anchor Borrowers' Programme and private investment.

On Maize and Sorghum, the demand from poultry and breweries has driven investment. Yields are still low at 1.8 tons per hectare compared to a global average of 5.6 tons, but improved seed adoption is closing the gap slowly.

Cassava and Yam, another staple, Nigeria remains the world's largest producer. Cassava is moving beyond garri into industrial starch and ethanol, creating new markets for farmers in Oyo, Kogi, and Cross River.

Livestock, Poultry production recovered after the 2024 avian flu outbreak, but feed costs remain high. Cattle and goat production face challenges from insecurity in the North Central belt, limiting pastoral movement.

The trend is clear: Nigeria's farmers are responding to price signals. What they need now is better access to inputs, water, finance, and markets.

THE LOSSES THAT UNDERCUT PROGRESS

The National Bureau of Statistics estimates post-harvest losses at 30-40% for fruits and vegetables, 20-25% for grains, and 15-20% for tubers. In monetary terms, that's over N3.5 trillion lost annually.

WHY LOSSES HAPPEN:

Poor Storage: Most smallholders lack access to cold rooms, hermetic bags, or silos. Tomatoes from Kano rot before reaching Lagos markets.

Bad Roads: As covered in Article 2, bad federal and rural roads delay evacuation. A truck that should take 6 hours takes 2 days, and produce spoils.



FARMERS WITH THEIR FARM GOODS

Insecurity: Farmers in parts of Benue, Niger, and Kaduna cannot harvest safely. Some abandon fields entirely.

Weak Market Information: Farmers often sell at harvest when prices are lowest because they lack data on demand in other markets.

Limited Processing: Without processing, surplus goes to waste. A tomato glut in June becomes a shortage by September.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS: WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT'S NOT

Anchor Borrowers' Programme: Despite repayment challenges, the programme expanded access to inputs for over 4 million smallholders. The shift now is toward commodity associations and off-taker agreements to improve loan recovery.

National Agricultural Growth Scheme (NAGS): Launched in 2024, NAGS provides subsidized inputs and mechanization services through e-voucher systems. It has reduced input diversion compared to older subsidy models.

Strategic Grain Reserves: The government has rebuilt reserves to 500,000 MT, up from 200,000 MT in 2023. The reserves are used for market stabilization during lean seasons. Release timing and transparency remain issues.

Mechanization Hubs: 100 mechanization service centers have been set up across LGAs, offering tractors and planters at subsidized rates. Uptake is growing, but equipment maintenance is a challenge.

Irrigation and Dry Season Farming: The River Basin Development Authorities are expanding irrigation on the Hadejia, Kano, and Sokoto-Rima basins. Dry season farming now accounts for 22% of rice output, up

from 14% in 2022.

PRIVATE SECTOR AND DONOR ROLES

Agribusinesses are stepping in where government capacity is limited. Olam, Dangote, and BUA have invested in integrated rice and sugar projects with outgrower schemes.

Cold chain firms like ColdHubs and Gridc are deploying solar-powered cold rooms in 120 markets, cutting vegetable spoilage by up to 80%.

Development partners such as USAID, IFAD, and AfDB are funding value chain projects in rice, cassava, and livestock. The focus is on market linkages and youth participation.

The challenge is scale. Most interventions reach 5-10% of smallholders. Reaching the other 90% requires policy consistency and private capital.

FINANCE: THE MISSING LINK

Agriculture accounts for 22% of GDP but receives less than 4% of commercial bank lending. Banks see agriculture as high risk due to weather, price volatility, and repayment issues.

THREE DEVELOPMENTS ARE CHANGING THAT:

Data-Driven Lending: Fintechs and banks are using satellite data and transaction history to underwrite farmers without collateral.

Warehouse Receipt System: Farmers can store produce in certified warehouses and use receipts as collateral for loans.

Insurance: NAIC is expanding index insurance for drought and flood. Uptake is still low, but premiums are being subsidized in pilot states.

Without affordable credit, farmers

cannot buy inputs on time or invest in storage. Credit reform is as important as seed reform.

YOUTH AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Over 60% of Nigeria's population is under 30, but youth participation in farming is low due to perceptions of low profit and high risk. That's changing with agri-tech and agri-processing.

Women dominate post-harvest handling and retail but own less than 15% of land. The Land Use Act and customary practices limit access. States like Ekiti and Nasarawa have piloted land banks for women and youth, with early success.

Programs like "Agripreneur 360" and "Youth in Agribusiness" are training 50,000 young people annually in agribusiness management. The goal is to make farming a business, not a survival activity.

TRADE AND EXPORT POTENTIAL

Nigeria has a trade deficit in food of over \$3bn annually. Yet it has export potential in sesame, ginger, cashew, and hibiscus.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a market of 1.3bn people. But non-tariff barriers, inconsistent standards, and logistics costs limit exports.

The Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Service is working with NAFDAC and SON to align standards with EU and ECOWAS requirements. Export processing zones in Ogun and Kano are also helping exporters meet packaging and certification needs.

CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change is making farming riskier. Irregular rainfall, flooding,

and heat waves affect yields. The 2025 floods destroyed 120,000 hectares of farmland in Kogi and Benue.

ADAPTATION MEASURES INCLUDE:

- Drought-tolerant seed varieties from IITA and NASC
- Climate-smart practices like zero tillage and intercropping
- Early warning systems for farmers via SMS

Sustainability is no longer optional. Buyers in Europe and the US now demand traceability and low-carbon production. Nigeria must meet these standards to access premium markets.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN BY 2027

Cut Post-Harvest Losses by Half
This requires investment in 500 new cold rooms, 200 rural aggregation centers, and better rural roads. A public-private fund of N200bn could achieve this in 3 years.

EXPAND IRRIGATION

Bring 250,000 hectares under irrigation by 2027. This stabilizes production and reduces dependence on rainfed agriculture.

REFORM LAND ACCESS.

State governments must accelerate land titling and create land banks for youth and women. Without secure tenure, investment won't happen.

IT IS IMPERATIVE TO STRENGTHEN EXTENSION SERVICES

Nigeria has one extension agent per 10,000 farmers. The target should be 1:2,000. Digital extension via WhatsApp and radio can bridge the gap.

How do we Link Farmers to Markets?

Commodity exchanges like AFEX and NCX need more aggregation centers and farmer education. When farmers sell through exchanges, they get better prices and avoid middlemen exploitation.

Nigeria must pass The Food Security Test, but how?

Food security is not just about quantity. It's about affordability, nutrition, and resilience. Nigeria produces enough calories on paper, but distribution and purchasing power remain weak.

The government's goal of 30% reduction in food inflation by 2027 is achievable if post-harvest losses fall, insecurity eases, and input costs stabilize. It requires coordination across agriculture, works, security, and finance ministries.

Nigeria's agriculture sector is at an inflection point. Production is up, but losses and costs eat the gains. The next two years must focus on what happens after the harvest: storage, transport, processing, and market access.