

Xenophobic attacks: Senate demands action against perpetrators

ABUJA
The Senate has condemned the wave of xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa and Ghana. It warned that continued violence, intimidation and reprisals

could strain diplomatic ties and undermine regional stability if urgent action was not taken. This followed a motion of urgent national importance sponsored by Sen. Aniekan Akpan and co-sponsored by Sen. Osita Izunaso during Tuesday's plenary. The lawmakers expressed

deep concern over what they described as a pattern of hostility in which Nigerians were increasingly profiled and treated as though being a Nigerian national alone constitutes an offence. In its resolutions, the senate urged the Federal Government to immediately initiate a

high-level diplomatic dialogue with South Africa and Ghana to secure protection for Nigerians and obtain enforceable assurances against future attacks. The upper chamber also called for a full, transparent, credible and independent investigation into all the reported incidents.

It also insisted that perpetrators and their sponsors must be identified, arrested, prosecuted and punished. "This is in addition to calling for the development of a comprehensive protection framework for Nigerians in the diaspora, including early warning mechanisms

and diaspora displacement coordination centres," it said. The lawmakers also pressed for strong regional enforcement and accountability measures within ECOWAS and the African Union to deter xen-

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Edo maintains top accountability ranking as Okpebholo hosts ICAN

BENIN CITY
The Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Tuesday said that the state's sustained top ranking on accountability indices reflects his administration's commitment to transparency and prudent financial management. Okpebholo stated this while receiving the leadership of the Institute of Chartered Ac-

countants of Nigeria at Government House, Benin City. The delegation, led by ICAN President and Chairman of Council, Haruna N. Yahya, paid a courtesy visit to the governor and presented the institute's incoming president, Queensley Safuratu Seghosime, an indigene of Edo State. Welcoming the team, the governor expressed delight at hosting the professional body, noting his interest in the accounting

profession and its linkage with his background in ICT. He described both fields as disciplines that require precision and integrity. He reiterated his administration's commitment to engaging qualified professionals, particularly chartered accountants, in managing the state's finances, explaining that his decision to retain key financial officers on assumption of office was based on competence and integrity.

"I believe in keeping people with proven integrity. Your profession does not allow room for misconduct, and that is critical in governance," he said, adding that his administration would consider employing more accountants to strengthen financial systems in the state. The governor congratulated Seghosime on her emergence as ICAN's incoming president and assured her of the state government's support.

Earlier, Yahya said the visit was part of ICAN's tradition of engaging stakeholders across states. He described the institute as a leading professional body in Afri-

ca, known for promoting accountability, accuracy and integrity. He commended the Edo State

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Ibhamawu flags off second-term bid, rallies support for SHINE agenda

JUDE EHEBHA
EKPOMA
The Majority Leader of Edo State House of Assembly (EDHA), Hon. Jonathan Ibhamawu, has formally flagged off his re-election campaign for a second term, drawing a large turnout of party faithful and stakeholders in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area. The well-attended event featured key political figures, including the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku; former Speaker, Hon. Thomas Okosun; lawmakers, party leaders, and other stakeholders. Addressing supporters, Ibhamawu expressed appreciation to party leaders, associates, and residents for their strong backing and endorsement of his second-term ambition. He reaffirmed his commitment to the transformation of Esan West and Edo State, pledging to consolidate on existing achievements while intensifying efforts towards sustainable growth and development across

the constituency. The lawmaker promised to continue serving with integrity and dedication, with a firm focus on improving the welfare of his constituents. He also reiterated his unwavering support for the SHINE agenda of the state governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo. Highlighting his record in office, Ibhamawu cited the construction of classroom blocks in primary schools, provision of water boreholes, road projects, and healthcare initiatives, assuring constituents of more impactful projects if re-elected. In his remarks, former Speaker, Hon. Thomas Okosun commended Ibhamawu for fulfilling his campaign promises, particularly his role in the revival of Ambrose Alli University and delivery of key infrastructure in the area. "We are here to urge you to return and represent us. Your mission to serve the people has been commendable. Ambrose Alli University is regaining its glory, and we need you to continue supporting the governor and sustaining the development strides," Okosun said.



OBA OF BENIN, OKPEBHOLO VISIT TINUBU: President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (middle) flanked by Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (right) and His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin, at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

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Police seal ACF headquarters ahead of NEC meeting, forum protests

KADUNA

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) has protested the sealing of its national headquarters in Kaduna by personnel of the Nigeria Police, describing the action as illegal and unjustified.

In a statement issued on Tuesday in Kaduna, the ACF said the closure of its office occurred ahead of its scheduled National Executive Council (NEC) meeting slated for Wednesday, May 6.

The statement, signed by the National Publicity Secretary of the forum, Prof. Tanko Muhammad Baba, said the police action was carried out "for no apparent reason."

According to the forum, the only indication linked to the development was an unsigned circular allegedly attributed to the Chairman of its Board of Trustees (BOT), Mr Bashir Dalhatu, claiming that the

NEC meeting had been cancelled because it was convened by the Secretary General.

The ACF, however, rejected the claim, stating that it was not aware of any court order restricting its activities or functions.

It further clarified that the BOT chairman had no authority outside the provisions of Section 8 of the ACF Constitution.

"The meeting in question, as well as that of the National Working Committee (NWC) held earlier today, was convened by the Chairman of ACF, Mamman Osuman, in accordance with Section 20, Subsection 3, and Section 13, Subsection 3(c) of the constitution," the statement said.

The forum emphasised that the meetings were called at the instance of its chairman and not the Secretary General, irrespective of ongoing debates concerning the latter's tenure.

The ACF called on the Inspector General of Police to intervene by directing the Kaduna State Commissioner of Police to unseal its headquarters.

It noted that earlier meetings had been held without incident and that relevant security agencies, including the police, had been duly informed.

"There is absolutely no basis for sealing the office unless there are unstated motives," the statement added.

The forum also disclosed

that delegates had already arrived in Kaduna ahead of the NEC meeting, expressing hope that "rationality and good judgement will prevail."



A CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (right), with the Vice-Chancellor of Ambrose Alli University, Professor Eunice Eboserehimen, during a condolence visit to the Deputy Governor over the passing of his mother. PHOTO: MOSES OBOH.

INEC set to begin third phase of Voter Registration in Rivers

PORT HARCOURT

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Rivers has announced the commencement of the third phase of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise in the state.

The INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), in Rivers, Mr Johnson Sinikiem, disclosed this in a statement, he issued to Journalists, in Port Harcourt, on Tuesday.

Sinikiem said that the exercise would begin on May 11 and run daily from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at all INEC offices across the 23 Local Government Areas of the state.

He added that the exercise would also be extended to Registration Area (RA) and ward levels on a rotational basis to ensure wider coverage and accessibility.

According to him, the exercise, scheduled to end on July 10, is designed to enable eligible citizens who are yet to register, as well as those seeking to transfer or update their voter information, to do so.

The REC called for the support and cooperation of stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organisations, the media and the general public, to ensure a smooth and peaceful electoral process.

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ophobia through diplomatic and legal action that protects African citizens across borders.

The upper chamber described the attacks as barbaric, unlawful and inconsistent with African brotherhood, raising alarm over what it termed advocacy of fear, humiliation and psychological trauma.

It noted that authorities in South Africa had acknowledged the incidents and pledged to restore order, a development it said confirmed the seriousness and contemporary nature of the incidents.

During the debate, Sen. Adams Oshiomhole (APC-Edo) canvassed a tougher response, warning of economic consequences if the attacks persisted.

"By the time we withdraw MTN licence, we revoke Dstv licence, those workers from South Africa will have good jobs to do.

"Let South Africa continue with their jobs. I believe there will be sanity," he said.

The senator urged colleagues

not to turn the chamber into a place of mourning, crying and lamenting, but to "bite in a manner that they will be the one begging."

However, Sen. Adamu Aliero (APC-Kebbi) urged caution, stressing the need for diplomacy.

"I rise to contribute to this very important debate. First and foremost, in international relations, there is what we call rule of reciprocity.

"Nigeria has done a lot for South Africa and we demand a lot also from South Africa by making sure that Nigerians living in South Africa and conducting their business do so freely and fairly without any intimidation," he submitted.

Aliero disclosed that diplomatic engagement was already underway.

"Mr President, I'm aware that the Federal Government of Nigeria has already stepped into this matter.

"Currently, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is already in South Africa to discuss with the authorities there," he said.

BNC, Edo Nursing College forge renewed partnership

BENIN CITY

The Bendel Newspapers Corporation (BNC), publishers of The Observer titles, and the Edo State College of Nursing Services have reaffirmed their commitment to a mutually beneficial partnership.

The renewed understanding was reached when the BNC

management team, led by its General Manager, Hon. Peter Odiboh, paid a visit to the college in Benin City on Tuesday.

Odiboh explained that the visit was aimed at identifying fresh areas of collaboration as well as reinvigorating the long-standing relationship between both institutions. He noted that BNC had been repositioned to deliver improved services, highlighting

the corporation's state-of-the-art printing machines.

The BNC boss, therefore, sought the patronage of the college in its range of services, particularly in printing and publishing.

In her response, the Provost of the college, Mrs Mabel Omobude, alongside other members of the management team, expressed delight over the visit.

She assured the BNC team of the college's readiness to do business with the corporation, while also acknowledging BNC's track record of quality service delivery, especially in the area of information dissemination.

The visit also featured a facility tour of the college, conducted by the Provost for the BNC management team.

SDP holds Edo congress, elects Roland-Bello Chairman

BENIN CITY

The Social Democratic Party (SDP), Edo State chapter, has conducted its state congress, producing Comrade Imonikhe Kelly Roland-Bello as Chairman, Ambassador Humphrey Erhahon as Deputy Chairman, and Comrade Dominion Osagie Irior as Secretary.

The peaceful congress, held in Benin City, was witnessed by officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), including Uduak Umoh, Head of Department, Election and Party

Monitoring (EPM), alongside other electoral officers.

In his speech after the exercise, the state chairman, Comrade Imonikhe Kelly Roland-Bello, commended party members for their orderly and peaceful conduct throughout the process, describing it as a demonstration of internal democracy.

He assured the newly elected executives of the party's readiness to make meaningful impact in forthcoming general elections and called on the electorate to align with the SDP, stressing the party's commitment to credible leadership and

people-oriented governance.

The chairman further used the occasion to congratulate members of the state executive, describing their emergence as both an achievement and a call to greater responsibility.

"Your emergence through congress marks not just a victory, but the beginning of serious responsibility. This is the time to roll up your sleeves and deliver purposeful leadership that will strengthen the party and inspire confidence among members and the public," he said.

He added that the task ahead requires unity, discipline, and

hard work, urging the new leadership to reflect dedication, accountability, and true service to the ideals of the party.

"Let your actions reflect dedication, accountability, and true service to the ideals of the SDP. Once again, congratulations—and now, the real work begins," he stated.

Also speaking, INEC representative, Uduak Umoh, lauded the maturity displayed by party members and urged them to continue to conduct their activities in strict adherence to electoral guidelines before, during, and after elections.

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Government for prudent financial management, noting that the state has consistently ranked high on ICAN's accountability index.

"Edo State has remained at the top based on our independent assessments over the past five years," he said, while urging the governor to sustain the performance.

Yahya also invited Okpebholo to the investiture ceremony of the incoming president sched-

uled for June 2, as well as ICAN's annual accountants' conference, where he is expected to serve as a special guest speaker. He further urged the state government to employ more chartered accountants to enhance transparency in public finance.

In a related development, the governor received the management of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, led by its Chief Medical Director, Reuben Agbons Eifediyi, alongside representatives of the Rear Admiral

Augustus Aikhomu Foundation, who briefed him on plans for the foundation's official launch scheduled for October in Abuja and invited him to attend.

The governor also hosted leaders of the All Progressives Congress in Etsako East Local Government Area, led by Musa Sule, as well as the new Edo State Coordinator of the National Youth Service Corps, Adedofun Fasirea, and his team.

Similarly, leaders of the Igbo community in Edo State,

led by Samson Awika, paid a courtesy visit to the governor. In response, Okpebholo assured them of greater inclusion in governance, promising the appointment of both a commissioner and a special adviser from the community.

Top government officials present at the engagements included the Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa; Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor; and Chief of Staff, Yakubu Musa, among others.

Obi's defection from ADC premeditated — Abdullahi

ABUJA

National Publicity Secretary of African Democratic Congress (ADC), Malam Bolaji Abdullahi, has described the recent defection of former Governors Peter Obi and Rabiu Kwankwaso from the party as a premeditated move.

Speaking on a popular television programme on Monday night, Abdullahi described ADC as a party with clear ideology and structure capable of offering Nigerians credible alternatives.

He said that some political actors were more interested in using the party as a mere special purpose vehicle for their personal ambition.

"Everything that government has thrown at ADC, we have re-

sisted. We have fought back and remained committed to our goal of rescuing Nigerians.

"We have been fighting for democracy within a party that has given us the best chance to serve the Nigerian people.

"Even Peter Obi once said at a coalition meeting that if we present two candidates against Bola Ahmed Tinubu, we would be handing him victory in 2027. So, what has changed?" he queried.

Dismissing claims that legal challenges influenced the defection, Abdullahi said that ADC currently faced only three flimsy cases in court, insisting that this could not justify the exit of the two political gladiators.

He stated that Obi received significant concessions within the party, including the oppor-

tunity to nominate the National Organising Secretary, a position widely regarded as the operational backbone of the party.

"None of the aspirants or leaders was given as much consideration as Peter Obi. The office of the national organising secretary is the engine room of the party.

"It handles congresses, elections and core operations. That office is occupied by his nominee," he said.

Addressing claims by some of Obi's supporters that the party was skewed in favour of a particular candidate, Abdullahi said such assertions were unfounded.

"We met with Peter Obi consistently. He attended coalition meetings regularly. He made it clear he would only join if the ticket was zoned.

"He took nearly a year to join ADC and never raised concerns about bias within the party, because there was none," he stated.

Using a metaphor to illustrate his point, Abdullahi said: "When a woman wants to leave a marriage, she gives all kinds of reasons, including being suffocated by too much love. That is what we are seeing now."

The ADC spokesman emphasised that while individuals were free to associate with any political platform, those who chose to leave should avoid offering what he described as flimsy excuses.

Abdullahi also noted that Obi's defection appeared to have been in motion for some time, citing a meeting held two months ago in Kano, involving Obi, Kwankwaso and former Bayelsa Governor,

Seriake Dickson.

"After that meeting in Kano, I reached out to Gov. Dickson and asked what had transpired. Kwankwaso had been considering joining ADC and suddenly, things changed.

"It raised questions about

whether there were efforts to divide the opposition and create an advantage for the incumbent," he said.

Abdullahi said that Dickson indicated that NDC remained an alternative platform open to interested politicians.

Ododo hails Tinubu on appointment of Enikanolaiye as minister

ABUJA

Governor Ahmed Ododo of Kogi, has lauded the appointment of Amb. Sola Enikanolaiye, as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, by President Bola Tinubu.

The governor in his congratulatory message to Enikanolaiye described the gesture as 'a proud moment for the people of the state'.

Ododo said this in a statement signed by Mrs Folashade Ayoade, Secretary to the State Government, on Tuesday.

According to him, the good will message represent the wish of the government and good people of the state on the appointment, adding that it was well deserved.

Ododo noted that Enikanolaiye's foreign service trajectory had taken him through responsibilities in Ethiopia, Serbia, Canada, the United Kingdom and India.

This, he added, was apart from postings to the headquarters of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the State House, Abuja.

"This historic nomination is a proud moment for Kogi State and a well-deserved recognition of your over three decades of distinguished diplomatic service.

"Your impressive record as Permanent-Secretary, key postings in Addis Ababa, Belgrade, Ottawa, London, New Delhi and recent role as Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign Affairs, speaks to the depth of experience you bring to this national assignment.

"We are confident that your leadership will strengthen Nigeria's foreign policy architecture and advance the nation's interests on the global stage. Once again, congratulations," he said.

The governor assured Enikanolaiye of unwavering support and prayers of the people of Kogi, as he undertook this significant responsibility.

Enikanolaiye earned a First Class degree in Political Science from the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, in 1981.

He posted a Distinction upon completing his Master of International Law and Diplomacy, from the University of Lagos in 1991.

He was also conferred with a Distinction in a Postgraduate programme in Diplomatic Studies, at the University of Oxford, in 1991.

Enikanolaiye, a recipient of multiple scholarships and awards at home and abroad, is married and blessed with children.



BNC'S VISIT EDO COLLEGE OF NURSING:

General Manager, Bendel Newspapers Corporation (BNC), publisher of *The Observer* titles, Hon. Peter Odiboh (4th right); Provost, Edo State College of Nursing Services, Mrs. Mabel Omobude (3rd right), and other management staff of BNC and the College, during a tour of facilities of the college when the management team of BNC visited.

Senate defections: Umeh, Abaribe dump ADC, join new parties

ABUJA

Sen. Victor Umeh and Sen. Enyinnaya Abaribe on Tuesday announced their defections from the African Democratic Congress (ADC) to different political parties, citing leadership crises and internal disputes.

Umeh, who represents Anambra Central Senatorial district, defected to the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), while Abaribe, who represents Abia South Senatorial District, defected to the Labour Party (LP).

President of Senate, Godswill Akpabio, announced the defections in separate letters at plenary.

Umeh, in his letter, said the decision was reached after extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including his family, constituents, and political allies.

"I have taken this decision after wide consultations with my family, my constituents, and supporters in view of the lingering divisions in the leadership and unending litigations in the African Democratic Congress," Umeh said.

He reaffirmed his commitment to national development, noting that he would continue to serve through his new political party.

"I remain committed to making my contributions towards the development of our dear nation, but this time through the NDC."

"Please, accept the assurances of my highest regards."

Abaribe in his letter, said his resignation from the ADC, takes immediate effect.

"My decision to resign my membership of the African Democratic Congress is effective immediately, accordingly, I have joined the Labour Party," he said.

Abaribe said his defection was based on what he described as a deepening leadership crisis within the party.

"My decision is anchored on the now well-known leadership crisis within the ADC, occasioned by multiple legal issues besetting the party," he said.

Akpabio made humour of the rising trend of defection among lawmakers while reacting to the new defections.

He said: "Clerk, note that he has moved and now he has moved from ADC to Labour Party. If he brings another letter, I won't announce it again," he said, eliciting laughter among lawmakers.

2027 poll: NDC vows to field credible candidates

CALABAR

The Nigerian Democratic Congress (NDC) in Cross River has said that it will field credible candidates in the 2027 general elections.

The Chairman, Mr Goddie Akpama stated this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Calabar.

Akpama said that NDC had

witnessed tremendous growth since Peter Obi and Rabiu Kwankwaso joined the party.

He described the party as a growing political force, saying that it has gained momentum in the last 48 hours.

"The NDC represents a new direction for Nigeria, the party remains committed to providing credible leadership.

"The party is aligning with

key political figures to strengthen its structure and national appeal," he said.

He stated that internal disagreements were part of democratic practice, and that it would not weaken the party's resolve.

The chairman said that NDC was building unity among members and stakeholders in order to prevent internal crisis.

Akpama further said that the

party was working to consolidate its base, and position itself as a viable alternative political platform that was determined to take over leadership at the national and state levels.

"We are not jokers, we will ensure that all elective positions are filled with candidates who have capacity and integrity," he said.

He said that the party's immediate focus was to strengthen its structure and maintain internal cohesion.

Experts urge police reforms to curb extrajudicial killings

LAGOS

Security experts have called for urgent, far-reaching reforms to curb rising cases of extra-judicial killings by police officers.

The experts spoke in separate interviews with newsmen on Tuesday in Lagos, while reacting to the recent killing of a suspect in Effurun, Delta, by some officers of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

The viral video of the 28-year-old suspect, shot dead on April 26 despite being restrained, has triggered angry reactions and nationwide debates.

NPF has dismissed the officers involved and forwarded the case file to the office of the Attorney General of the Federation for prosecution.

Mr Seyi Babaeko, a security expert and Managing Director of Absolute Security and Advance Protocol Ltd, said that only a comprehensive approach combining accountability, prevention, and institutional reform can effectively address the issue and safeguard human lives.

"This reforms will curb the

killings and restore public confidence in law enforcement and fears of recurring occurrences of extrajudicial killings and abuses by officers," he said.

He described the Delta killing as a grave tragedy and a betrayal of public trust, saying that it raised deeper concerns about accountability and the protection of human lives.

"The unlawful taking of life by those entrusted with public protection is a profound betrayal of duty and a violation of human dignity," he said.

Babaeko, however, lauded the swift action by the Inspector-General of Police, Mr Olatunji Disu, who approved disciplinary measures, including the dismissal and prosecution of the officers involved.

While commending the move, he maintained that punitive measures after such incidents could not be substituted for preventive reforms.

"While disciplining erring officers is necessary, it is not enough, preventing the loss of life is a greater obligation than punishing it afterward," he said.

NEWS**COAS urges synergy, technology adoption to tackle insecurity****JAJI (KADUNA)**

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shu'aibu, has reiterated the need for innovation, professionalism and strategic collaboration to address Nigeria's evolving security challenges.

Shu'aibu, represented by the Commandant, Nigerian Defence Academy, Maj.-Gen. Oluyemi Olatoye, made the call on Tuesday at the opening of the Nigerian Army Combat Arms Training Week 2026 in Jaji, Kaduna.

According to him, the long-standing tradition of

the training week provides an opportunity to reflect on the enduring values, shaping the present and future of the Nigerian Army's combat arms.

He added that the event also served as a platform to review critical issues affecting combat arms and corps, while fostering collaboration toward enhancing operational effectiveness.

The COAS noted that the 2026 edition, held in Jaji Military Cantonment, had brought together experts, practitioners and partners, committed to strengthening Nigeria's security architecture.

He expressed confidence that

the gathering would generate fresh ideas to improve the army's operational effectiveness, in a complex security environment.

Shu'aibu stressed the importance of adapting to evolving threats through innovation and the integration of modern defence technologies.

He urged personnel to embrace both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches guided by sound doctrine and professionalism.

The army chief also emphasised the need for stronger synergy

between manpower and equipment, noting that operational effectiveness depended on both.

He reaffirmed his commitment to personnel welfare, including improvements in accommodation, healthcare, and family support.

Shu'aibu lauded President Bola Tinubu for his continued support and guidance to the Nigerian army.

In his remarks, Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna represented by Dr Sule Shu'aibu, Com-

missioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, described the army as a reliable partner in tackling security challenges.

He said the ongoing efforts to reposition combat arms operations, reflected professionalism and alignment with global best practices.

Sani noted that despite successes recorded against terrorism, insurgency and banditry, insecurity still posed challenges to economic growth, investment and infrastructure development.

He stressed the need for sustained collaboration between state security agencies and the Nigerian army to address emerging threats.

The governor also paid tribute to fallen heroes who lost their lives in defence of the nation.

Earlier, the Commander, Infantry Corps, Maj.-Gen. Godwin Mutkut, said the training week was a vital platform for enhancing operational effectiveness and inter-corps cooperation.

Group demands probe, urges calm over Kwara detention claims**ABUJA**

An NGO, the Unity Advocacy Group (UAG) has called for a thorough investigation into allegations that about 150 members of a Fulani community died in a military-controlled detention facility in Kwara, urging Nigerians to remain calm.

The Convener of UAG, Mr Ifeanyi Aigbedion, made the call in a statement on Tuesday in Abuja.

Aigbedion said the claim, reportedly attributed to Amnesty International, remained unverified and should not be treated as established fact.

He said allegations of such magnitude required proper verification by competent authorities before conclusions were drawn.

He warned that the circulation of unconfirmed reports, particularly on sensitive issues, could inflame ethnic tensions

and undermine national unity.

According to him, while the allegations are serious and deserve attention, they must be subjected to a transparent and independent investigation through appropriate legal and institutional channels.

Aigbedion noted that the Nigerian Armed Forces had maintained a record of professionalism and respect for human rights in both domestic operations and international peacekeeping missions.

He said the military's conduct under the United Nations, African Union and ECOWAS had earned recognition for discipline and adherence to international humanitarian standards.

The group leader also cautioned against narratives that could misrepresent security institutions based on unverified claims, stressing the importance of balanced and fact-based reporting.

World Hand Hygiene Day: NCDC, WHO, USCDC call for action to curb infections**ABUJA**

Stakeholders in Nigeria's health sector, have called for urgent and sustained action on hand hygiene to reduce infections and save lives.

The stakeholders include the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), World Health Organisation (WHO), and the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (USCDC).

They made the call on Tuesday in Abuja, during the 2026 World Hand Hygiene Day celebration, themed "Action Saves Lives," where experts emphasised that consistent practice—not just knowledge—is critical to improving patient safety.

Dr Tochi Okwor, Head of Disease Prevention and Control, NCDC, said Nigeria has institutionalised hand hygiene as a national priority through its infection prevention and control (IPC) framework.

According to her, the framework is anchored on the philos-

ophy of "One Nation, One Plan."

Okwor noted that initiatives such as "Turn Nigeria Orange for Ownership" and the "Orange Network" were designed to strengthen systems and ensure accountability across health facilities.

According to her, the major challenge in healthcare today is no longer lack of awareness but failure to act consistently.

"The issue is not whether we know what to do, but whether we do it every time, for every patient," she said.

She cited real-life cases, including a fungal infection outbreak in a neonatal ward traced to poor hygiene practices, as well as infections acquired during hospital care that led to severe complications for patients.

She also warned that healthcare workers remain at risk of infectious diseases such as Lassa fever when hand hygiene protocols are not strictly followed.

"Every contact with a patient or their environment is a moment for hand hygiene. Missing that moment can have serious consequences," she said.



OPENING OF THE NIGERIAN ARMY COMBAT ARMS TRAINING WEEK:

Commandant, Nigerian Defence Academy, Maj.-Gen. Oluyemi Olatoye, (right) presents a souvenir to the representative of the state Governor, Dr Sule Shu'aibu, Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs at the opening of the Nigerian Army Combat Arms Training Week 2026 in Jaji, Kaduna.

Malaria elimination: Innovation, collaboration key —Expert**ABUJA**

Prof. Olugbenga Mokuolu, a health expert and Strategic Adviser to the Coordinating Minister of Health on Malaria elimination, has said that innovation and sustained collaboration are key drivers in Nigeria's efforts to eliminate malaria.

He said the approach is also central to reducing the burden of the disease among vulnerable populations nationwide.

Mokuolu said this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja.

The expert, also a consultant pediatrician and senior national

malaria programme official, said that guided by policy frameworks and a partnership, Nigeria was positioned to achieve a malaria-free status in the future.

He said the country's efforts were anchored on the National Malaria Policy and the National Malaria Strategic Plan (2026–2030), which outlined commitments, direction, and actionable strategies for effective implementation nationwide.

According to him, the strategic plan, developed in five-year cycles, captures comprehensive approaches to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and coordination of malaria interventions across different levels of healthcare de-

livery systems nationwide.

"Malaria control in Nigeria is not a one-dimensional effort. It involves a combination of preventive, diagnostic, and treatment strategies working together to deliver impact," he said.

He emphasised that collaboration remained a legal and operational cornerstone of malaria response, involving government institutions, development partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector working together toward shared national goals.

He said that mechanisms such as the national technical malaria working group ensured transparency and alignment,

enabling partners to share plans, funding commitments, and areas of intervention effectively across sectors.

"There is also strong inter-sectoral collaboration involving ministries such as education, environment, and agriculture, as well as agencies like the armed forces and meteorological institutions," he added.

He further highlighted community engagement, noting that traditional rulers, religious leaders, and grassroots organisations played active roles in promoting awareness, encouraging preventive practices, and strengthening accountability within affected communities nationwide.

Cancer: Radiologist canvases more mammogram screening centres for early detection**LAGOS**

The Coordinator, One-Stop-Breast Clinic, Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), has called for the provision of more subsidised mammogram cancer screening centres for early detection of cases.

Yakubu, also a Consultant Radiologist and Head, Radiodiagnosis Department, LUTH, made the call in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Lagos.

He underscored the need to make the mammogram screening machine readily available, affordable and accessible so that

every woman from 40 years and above could easily be screened.

He explained that mammogram test had a very high sensitivity to detect breast cancer at a very early stage.

Yakubu advocated for the availability of the mammogram screening services at the Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), for easy access to citizens.

He, therefore, called on philanthropists, organisations and well-meaning Nigerians to invest into breast cancer management by ensuring that mammogram machine were made available for average person to access care at

no cost or subsidised rate.

He cited the U.S. where nine in every 10 women with breast cancer survived, calling for increased commitment toward addressing the issue of cancer in the country.

"It is necessary that every woman from 40 years and above have free breast mammogram screening, because it has the sensitivity of detecting breast cancer at early stage.

"Before breast is seen among the elderly, but now we are getting people as young as 35, 40, 45 year old with breast cancer.

"In U.S., hardly will a woman die of breast cancer – nine out

of 10 women will survive, while in Nigeria, nine out of 10 women with breast cancer will die, so, reverse is the case here. But, the narrative can be changed.

"Infact, I believed that every PHCs in the country should have a mammogram machine – which is achievable if the country have the political will to do it.

"Let mammogram screening machine be available, affordable and accessible. Presently, it costs about N18,000 to undergo the test – it shouldn't be, with as low as N6,000, a patient should be able to access mammogram screening," Yakubu said.

EDHA 2027: Ayemere gets party's nod for Igueben Constituency, as Charles Enahonna hails decision

IGUEBEN

The leadership and members of All Progressives Congress APC, Ward 8, Igueben Local Government Area of Edo State, have endorsed Engr Obehi Ayemere for the Igueben Constituency, ahead of the State House of Assembly election.

The endorsement according to a statement jointly signed

by the ward's Chairman and Secretary, Hon Monday Oghae and Hon. Okosun Abel, respectively, was the outcome of an enlarged meeting of Ward 8 (Amahor/Ugun ward) of Igueben Local Government Area.

The enlarged ward meeting held on 3rd May 2026 at Amahor, had in attendance party leaders, ward executive, past and present councillors, party faithful and affirmed the endorse-

ment of Engr. Obehi Ayemere for the Igueben State Constituency in the Edo State House of Assembly election by party leaders due to popular support.

The meeting also declared the Ward's support for the leadership of the APC in Igueben Local Government Area of the state.

While welcoming members to the meeting, the chairman had thanked them for their cooperation during the just concluded

Local Government primary which produced one of their own, Hon. Endurance Azamegbe aka Paragon as the APC Chairmanship Candidate for Igueben Local Government council ahead of the forthcoming LG Election.

The meeting did not end until issues regarding how to advance the development of the ward, particularly the construction of the Amahor - Ugun Road were tabled.

The chairman appealed to all APC ward 8 members to align with decisions of the party leadership in order to move the party forward.

He also informed members of the leadership Change in the ward, which has elevated Hon Toju to his new position as Leader of ward 8 (Amahor/Ugun Ward) and enjoined all to cooperate with him to put the ward on fast lanes of development.

Speaking also was Hon. Charles Ekholowa Enahonna,

a leading House of Assembly aspirant from the ward, told all present that in abiding by the party's decision and in the spirit of sportsmanship, he had collapsed his structure in Support of the candidacy of Engr. Obehi Ayemere for the EDHA election.

He thanked the ward leadership for its courage, support and encouragement, assuring them of his continued loyalty to the party and its leadership, at the ward, local government and state levels.



JOINT GRAND THANKSGIVING MASS:

Brothers of Knight of St. John International Commandery 574- Maitama, during a joint grand thanksgiving Mass at Papal Ground in Abuja on Sunday

NAFDAC intensifies fight against fake drugs with digital innovation —Official

BAUCHI

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has said it's strengthening regulatory operations through technology-driven tools and intensifying surveillance to combat substandard and falsified medicines.

Mr Khamis Yahaya, the Bauchi State Coordinator of the agency, said this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Bauchi.

Yahaya said that the agency had adopted several digital innovations to improve reporting, verification and tracking of regulated products.

According to him, the Med Safety App enables users to report adverse drug reactions and post-immunisation events, even in areas with poor network coverage, as reports are automatically transmitted once connectivity is restored.

"The NAFDAC Green Book App allows consumers, health-care workers and other stakeholders to verify registered products by checking details such as registration status, manufacturer information, active ingredients, batch numbers and expiry dates.

"The agency also conducts risk-based sampling and laboratory analysis, where products are collected from markets and tested in accredited laboratories.

"The regulatory actions, including public alerts, product recalls and enforcement measures are taken when products fail to meet required standards," he said.

Yahaya, however, identified challenges in drug storage and transportation, particularly for temperature-sensitive medicines.

"Some temperature-sensitive drugs are found improperly stored on shelves. Poor storage conditions and lack of cold-chain systems often lead to reduced drug potency," he said.

Tomato prices soar on supply shortage, rising transport costs

LAGOS

The Tomatoes Growers and Processors Association of Nigeria (TOPAN) has attributed the current surge in tomato prices to dwindling supply and rising transportation costs.

The Kaduna State Chairman of the association, Mr Rabiu Zuntu, made this known in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Lagos.

Zuntu said the scarcity of tomatoes, largely due to the end of the harvest season in major pro-

ducing areas in the North, was a key driver of the price hike.

According to him, supply has significantly declined, with only limited harvests available in a few locations.

"There is scarcity of tomatoes at the moment. Production has ended in most parts of the North, and we now rely on minimal harvests from a few areas," he said.

He added that a 50kg basket of tomatoes, which sold for between N35,000 and N40,000 last month, now costs between N115,000 and N125,000.

Zuntu also noted that prices at the source had risen sharply, with the same quantity selling for between N50,000 and N70,000 in the North, compared to N7,500 to N10,000 in January.

He attributed the wider price disparity in Lagos and other southern states to escalating logistics costs.

"Transporting a trailer load of tomatoes from the North now costs about N2 million due to higher fuel prices, compared to between N1.1 million and N1.3 million two months ago.

"The increase in transporta-

tion cost has been transferred to consumers, thereby pushing up market prices," he said.

Zuntu explained that tomato prices are determined by demand and supply dynamics, noting that the current shortage would likely persist until the next harvest cycle.

He projected that fresh harvests expected from July could stabilise supply, with prices likely to decline from August.

Meanwhile, some consumers and food vendors have expressed concern over the rising cost and scarcity of tomatoes.

Nursing Council seeks policy support, funding for private practice

ABUJA

The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) has called for stronger policy support, funding and awareness to promote and regulate private nursing practice in the country.

The call is contained in a communiqué issued at the NMCN Leaders Conference in Abuja and signed by the Director of Nursing Education, Dr Emmanuel Udontre.

Udontre said gaps between nursing theory and clinical practice continued to undermine service quality, citing deficiencies in knowledge, skills,

professional values and organisational structures.

He stressed the need to adopt digital health solutions, including e-learning, tele-nursing and artificial intelligence, to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving healthcare environment.

According to him, existing collaboration among stakeholders is yet to be fully optimised to achieve integrated, efficient and patient-centred healthcare delivery.

He also underscored the need to strengthen safety and security in healthcare environments to protect workers and ensure uninterrupted service delivery.

Udontre noted that inadequate

translation of research findings into clinical practice remained a challenge, limiting improvements in healthcare outcomes.

"The Federal and State Governments, in collaboration with regulatory bodies, should implement the Clinical Partnership/Collaborative model and strengthen linkages between academic institutions and clinical settings to bridge the theory-practice gap.

"Government, regulatory bodies and educational institutions should ensure nursing education is competency-based, evidence-driven, technology-enabled and aligned with global best practices.

"Healthcare institutions, regulatory agencies and professional bodies should strengthen interprofessional collaboration, teamwork and enforce standardised, criteria-based quality care.

"Government, financial institutions and professional bodies should provide policy support, funding and awareness to promote and regulate private nursing practice," he said.

He added that regulatory bodies and healthcare institutions should reinforce professional standards, accreditation, ethical practice, communication and documentation, while promoting professional indemnity insurance.

NGOs train first responders to curb avoidable deaths

ABUJA

Three Non-Governmental Organisations on Tuesday in Abuja organised a training for desk officers from various organisations, including the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), on first-response skills to reduce deaths during emergencies.

The organisers are Smile Network International, the HAVIDS Centre for Environment and Development, and the Fountain Heritage Network for Social Development.

The training was tagged "Life-firstNaija: Community Bystander First Responder Trainer", and aims at equipping citizens with the knowledge, confidence and skills to respond promptly in emergency situations.

Dr MacJohn Nwaobiala, a retired Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Education, said the initiative was designed to equip ordinary citizens with life-saving skills before professional help arrives.

Nwaobiala, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Fountain Heritage Network for Social Development, stressed

the importance of timely response to emergencies.

He noted that emergencies could occur anywhere, including homes, markets, schools and workplaces.

He described the training as a sensitisation programme to address low levels of emergency response in Nigeria, which he said had contributed to avoidable deaths.

"People are often unaware of what to do during emergencies. Instead of taking prompt action, they sometimes crowd around victims and unintentionally worsen the situation.

"We felt the need to create awareness and build a network of advocates who can promote proper emergency response and educate others in their workplaces.

"How do you respond in an emergency or accident? How do you save lives and reduce pain? This is our first sensitisation programme in Abuja, and it will continue," he said.

Nwaobiala added that the initiative would also help address concerns about negligence in healthcare by promoting early intervention before victims reach hospitals.

NEWS

Defence Minister urges students to support national security efforts

ABUJA

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa, has called on Nigerian students to play active roles in strengthening national security, saying safe-

guarding the country is a collective responsibility.

Musa made the call while addressing students from the Department of Political Science and Diplomacy of Veritas University, Abuja, during an educational visit to the Ministry.

This is contained in a statement signed by Queenet Ihio-ma-Hart, a Chief Information Officer, on behalf of the Director, Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Defence, on Tuesday in Abuja.

He urged students, as future leaders, to be vigilant and report suspicious activities, stressing that national unity and security could not be achieved by government alone.

"Students have a role to play in fighting insecurity. See

something and report it. The nation's unity is not for government alone; everyone has a role to play in ensuring peace and security," he said.

The minister also spoke on issues relating to technological gaps, food security, and Nigeria's cooperation with Turkey, noting that the Ministry was strengthening collaboration with relevant agencies to address key national challenges.

He said efforts were ongoing to boost local defence produc-

tion through the integration of skilled Nigerians into the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) for the production of military equipment, including drones.

Musa added that local production remained critical to addressing equipment shortages and reducing dependence on foreign procurement.

He also advised students to avoid cybercrime and channel their creativity towards national development, adding

that military training should be made more accessible as it builds discipline and resilience.

Earlier, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mr Richard Pheelangwah, said the visit was aimed at exposing students to Nigeria's defence architecture and career opportunities in security-related fields.

The students described the visit as enlightening and expressed appreciation for the insights gained into the workings of the ministry.

Troops apprehend gunrunner, raid IPOB hideouts in South-East

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army says troops of Operation UDO KA have intensified operations in the South-East, apprehending a suspected gunrunner, foiling an ambush, and raiding a criminal hideout in Abia and Imo.

An operational report made available to reporters on Tuesday, revealed that troops, in collaboration with operatives of other security agencies, apprehended the suspected gunrunner in Ukwa East Local Government Area of Abia.

The report said preliminary investigation revealed that the suspect was involved in transporting weapons to criminal elements through a third party from Bayelsa.

According to the report, efforts are ongoing to recover the weapons and track down other

members of the network.

"In a related development, troops were ambushed while assessing a burnt vehicle along the SPDC-Etekuru road in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo.

"Troops subsequently exploited the area and recovered two burnt vehicles as well as two corpses, which were evacuated for further action."

The report added that troops, in conjunction with local vigilantes, raided a suspected cultist hideout in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo, leading to the arrest of five suspects.

One of the suspects, according to the report, has offered to lead troops to a suspected armoury within the area.

It added that the operations underscored ongoing efforts to dismantle criminal networks and restore security across the South-East.

**EDUCATIONAL VISIT:**

Minister of Defence, Christopher Musa, in a group photo with students of the Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Veritas University, Abuja, during an educational visit by the students to the Ministry on Tuesday in Abuja.

2027: NNPP adopts consensus, pardons expelled members

LAGOS

The Founder of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Dr Boniface Aniebonam, has said the party will adopt consensus in deciding its candidates for the 2027 general elections.

According to him, the party has pardoned all expelled members and will re-admit them into its fold.

Aniebonam, who is also the Chairman, Board of Trustees of the party, confirmed the development in a statement in Lagos on Tuesday.

The chairman said it was an established fact that some primary elections in the country had denied very credible candidates from participating in the general elections to test their popularity.

He said NNPP would avoid this scenario in accordance with our resolutions during its last convention in Lagos to adopt the principles of consensus candidates to bring out the best candidates rather than money politics.

"Under the circumstances, Nigerians who are committed to the ideals of a new Nigeria, who may not want to waste their resources on primary elections and has the capacity to undertake effective cam-

paign for the general election should come forward.

"In-particular are the women who shall enjoy free nomination fee shall pay only administrative cost as a commitment and loyalty to the NNPP.

"Aside from our elected members in their various states that are entitled to automatic tickets, the tickets for presidential and other elective positions are open for contest but the best person will be picked via consensus," Aniebonam stated.

According to him, the party in its last convention in Lagos, promised automatic tickets for all its elected members in the executive positions and legislative arms of government for the 2027 general elections.

Aniebonam said the party had not shifted its position on that notwithstanding the misdemeanours of some members.

Speaking on the pardon for suspended members, the founder recalled that in the wake of internal wranglings and litigations that hit the party, it expelled some members for anti party activities.

He said: "By virtue of the inherent powers conferred upon me by the NNPP constitution as the founder and chairman, board of trustees in council.

"I hereby declare a general

Delta Fed Constituency crisis: APC chieftain warns of mass defection to NDC

ABUJA

Delta APC Chieftain, John Feh, has called for urgent intervention of the national leadership of the APC in the Bomadi/Patani Federal Constituency politics, warning of massive defection of members to opposition Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) if nothing is done.

Feh stated this in a statement made available to our correspondent in Abuja on Tuesday.

He said that Bomadi/Patani Federal Constituency was ap-

proaching a critical tipping point that demanded immediate and strategic intervention.

According to him, emerging political developments indicate a high likelihood of mass defections driven by growing dissatisfaction among key stakeholders and grassroots supporters.

"This is not a routine political shift. It is a systemic signal of discontent that can fundamentally alter the political balance of the constituency and beyond, if not urgently addressed.

"The situation calls for decisive, fair and forward-looking

action by the Delta Governor and all relevant stakeholders to preserve democratic stability and public confidence," he said.

The APC chieftain said at the core of the crisis was a deep and sustained dissatisfaction with the quality of legislative representation over nearly three decades.

"Nicholas Mutu, having occupied the office for approximately 28 years, is widely perceived to have delivered limited measurable impact: no clearly identifiable sponsored bills, motions or constituency-driven legislative interventions.

"Beyond this, concerns persist regarding the absence of a functional constituency office and limited engagement with the people.

"Representation, in its true sense, requires visibility, accessibility and tangible outcomes; where these are lacking over such an extended period, public frustration becomes inevitable," he said.

Feh added that compounding the dissatisfaction was the growing perception that Mutu's continued occupation of the office had been sustained largely through political patronage rather than performance or competitive democratic processes.

Maternal Health: UNFPA urges Sokoto students to pursue midwifery careers

SOKOTO

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has begun sensitising secondary school students to consider studying nursing and midwifery as career choices for their future across Sokoto State in northern Nigeria.

Mrs Jamila Gatawa, UNFPA Desk Officer in the Sokoto State Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, said this during a guidance and counselling talk for adolescent schoolgirls on Tuesday in Sokoto.

Gatawa, also Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Department, emphasised that marriage should never prevent girls from getting educated, insisting opportunity and learning must remain accessible to every girl.

"Educated women are the backbone of every healthy society, especially in the healthcare sector. No girl should be denied the chance to learn and succeed," she said.

She announced that UNFPA, with support from the European Union EU-SARAH Project,

would provide scholarships to 500 women and girls under the Community Midwifery Scholarship and Bonding Scheme initiative in Sokoto.

She emphasised that sourcing skilled birth attendants within each community would address worker shortages, noting that importing personnel from other areas often undermined service delivery and limited effective healthcare access locally.

"The two-year initiative was designed for rural areas, hard reach and security affected communities across Sokoto state

where deployments of health-care workers from urban centres become challenges in Sokoto.

"This is a golden opportunity for young women who want to build careers and serve their communities," she added, pledging government support to ensure fairness and transparency in selecting beneficiaries process.

Earlier, Chairman of the Ward Development Committee, Dr Aliyu Bala-Gadanga, said more young women were needed in the profession to tackle maternal and infant deaths across communities in Sokoto State.

JUDICIARY**NEWS****Alleged N115m fraud: Court orders lawyer, others' arrest****LAGOS**

A Federal High Court in Lagos has issued a bench warrant for the arrest of a lawyer and others charged with obtaining money by false pretences.

The defendants, Ayo Adelaja, Quattro Architects Ltd and Ejeta Etuoniyo are being prosecuted by the Special Fraud Unit (SFU) of the police.

Justice Yellin Bogoro issued the order, following an application by the prosecutor ACP M.S Usman.

The defendants were alleged to have conspired to obtain the sum of N115 million from

one Barbara Komolafe and Olukemi Fetoga, under the pretence that same represents amount for a four bedroom luxury terrace located at Alma beach estate in Ikate Lagos.

When the case was called, the prosecutor, informed the court that efforts to secure attendance of the defendants in court had proved abortive.

He told the court that the third defendant is a lawyer adding that the prosecution had made moves to get them for arraignment but it failed.

He, consequently, applied orally that a bench warrant to be issued for arrest of the defendants.

The court granted the application and adjourned the case until July 9, for arraignment of the defendants.

In the charge, the prosecution alleged that the defendants committed the offence between April 2021 and July 2022 in Lagos.

They were alleged to have obtained the sum through a Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB) account number 0175248383 belonging to Quattro Architects Ltd.

They were alleged to have obtained the sums of money from both complainants, under the pretext of renting same luxury apartment to them.

The prosecution alleged that the defendants had intent to defraud the complainants by concealing from them, encumbrances and facts material to the property.

According to him, they obtained the sum of N55 million from Komolafe and the sum of N60 million from Fetoga with the intent of renting same luxury apartment to them.

The offence contravenes the provisions of sections 1(1)(a), 1(3) and 8 of the Advanced Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offence Act, 2006

It also contravenes the provisions of sections 423 of the Criminal Code Law of the Fed-

eration, 2004.

The court has adjourned the case until May 25 for arraignment of the defendants.

Woman seeks divorce after three months of marriage, returns dowry**KADUNA**

A woman, Fatima Usman, on Tuesday seeks divorce from her husband, Sulaiman Adamu, at a court sitting at Magajin Gari Shari'a Court in Kaduna.

Fatima who is the complainant prays the court to dissolve their marriage of three months through Khul'i (a type of divorce where a woman returns her dowry in exchange for her freedom).

"The dowry is N100,000 but I am willing to pay half of the dow-

ry which is N50,000", she said.

The judge, Malam Yakubu Abdullahi, asked the defendant if he had agreed to what the complainant said.

Abdullahi answered with "yes, it's okay for me".

The judge further explained that in Islam when a woman wants a divorce, she is allowed to return her dowry which could be higher or lesser than the actual dowry paid to her.

The judge ruled that their marriage had been dissolved and that she should pay back the dowry immediately.

Edo Hajj Board fixes May 6, 7 for final screening of 2026 intending pilgrims

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrim Welfare Board has fixed Wednesday, May 6, and Thursday, May 7, 2026, for the final screening of intending pilgrims ahead of their departure to Saudi Arabia for the 2026 Hajj exercise.

In a statement signed by the Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkibir, the Board also announced that the exercise will include the distribution of pilgrims' travel bags to all registered pilgrims across the state.

According to the schedule, intending pilgrims from Edo South Senatorial District are to appear on Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at

the Hajj Board office, 2/3 Ugomosun Street, off Dumez Road, Benin City, by 9:00 a.m.

Those from Edo Central and Edo North Senatorial Districts will undergo screening on Thursday, May 7, 2026, at the Irrua Central Mosque, opposite the Palace, and Arafat Mosque, Auchi, respectively.

Both sessions are scheduled to commence at 9:00 a.m.

The Board stated that the final screening exercise is compulsory for all intending pilgrims, noting that it remains a key requirement for participation in the Hajj as well as for the processing and collection of e-Visas.

It urged all pilgrims to attend punctually and comply with the directives to avoid any disruption to their participation in the 2026 pilgrimage exercise.

**AKYEA'S VISIT TO NDLEA:**

L-R: Acting Head of Mission, Ghana High Commission, Nigeria, Mrs Gladys Akyea; Chairman and Chief Executive, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), retired Brig-Gen. Mohammed Marwa, and Director-General of Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) Brig-Gen Maxwell Mantey, during the visit of Acting Head of Mission, Ghana High Commission, to NDLEA Headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

Court clears ex-HoS Oyo-Ita of N570m fraud case after 6 years**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday discharged and acquitted Mrs Winifred Oyo-Ita, former Head of Service (HoS) of the Federation, of alleged money laundering offences, six years after the trial began.

Justice James Omotosho, in a ruling on the separate no-case submissions filed by Oyo-Ita and her co-defendants, held that their applications were meritorious.

The former HoS, her Personal Assistant, Ubong Effiok, and seven others had been facing alleged money laundering charge to the tune of N570 million.

Justice Omotosho, in the ruling, held that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)'s case "was built on the quicksand of speculations, suspicions and shoddy investigation."

According to the judge, I must say here that the case presented by the prosecution has no weight whatsoever.

"Crucial elements of money

laundering offences which are the establishment of a predicate offence were glaringly absent in this case presented by the prosecution," Justice Omotosho said.

The judge held that Oyo-Ita, who was the 1st defendant in the 18-count charge, was not a shareholder or director in the companies allegedly linked to her.

Justice Omotosho also held that the monies allegedly given to the ex-HoS by the 3rd prosecution witness (PW-3) and PW-5 had not been shown to be proceeds of illegal activity.

"Those contracts were duly approved and executed as confirmed by PW-7 and PW-8.

"Even the Estacodes, Duty Tour Allowances (DTAs) and air tickets paid by PW-4 to 7th defendant (Ubong Effiok) for the benefit of 1st defendant (Oyo-Ita) have also been shown to have been duly approved and that the 1st defendant was not an approving authority."

According to the judge, her alleged failure to fully disclose her assets was also not thoroughly investigated and the result is a case that is doomed to fail.

"In final analysis, the no-case submissions filed by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd defendants on the one hand, the 4th - 6th defendants and the 7th to 9th defendants are meritorious.

"Consequently, these no-case submissions are hereby upheld.

"Accordingly, the 1st - 9th defendants are hereby discharged and acquitted of the 18-count charge," Justice Omotosho ruled.

The EFCC had, on Feb. 28, 2020, filed the 18 counts against Oyo-Ita, Frontline Ace Global Services Ltd and Asanaya Projects Ltd as 1st to 3rd defendants.

The commission, in the charge marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/20/2020, also named Garba Umar, Slopes International Ltd, Gooddeal Investments Ltd, Ubong Okon Effiok and U & U Global Services Ltd as 4th to 9th defendants respectively.

The defendants were being prosecuted for alleged fraud in relation to DTAs, Estacodes, conference fees fraud and receiving kick-backs on contracts to the tune of N570 million.

In count one, Oyo-Ita, while serving as a deputy director in the Federal Ministry of Power, and Frontline Ace Global Services Ltd, a company incorporated in Nigeria and of which she was alleged to be the sole signatory of its bank accounts at Zenith Bank, were alleged to have, sometime in April, 2010, committed the offence.

The ex-HoS and the company were alleged to have collaborated in disguising the genuine ownership of the sum of N20 million paid by the ministry into the Frontline Ace Zenith Bank account number: 1011518656 which sum was derived directly from an illegal act.

The offence is punishable under Section 14(1)(b) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2004, among other counts.

Oyo-Ita and her co-defendants, who were first arraigned on March 23, 2020, before Justice Taiwo Taiwo (rtd.), pleaded not guilty to the 18 counts.

The case was, however, re-assigned to Justice Omotosho after Justice Taiwo's retirement.

The EFCC, in the trial,

called eight witnesses and tendered documentary evidence to establish its case.

After the prosecution closed its case, the defendants opt for a no-case submission.

The defendants, who argued that the prosecution had failed to establish any ingredient of the offences against them beyond reasonable doubt to warrant any defence whatsoever, submitted that the commission had not made out a prima facie case against them.

Delivering the ruling, Justice Omotosho observed that a no-case submission is a situation where there is no sufficient evidence adduced by the prosecution on which the court can convict a defendant or for him to enter his defence.

According to him, It can also mean a situation where it appears to the court that the prosecution has failed to establish a prima facie case.

"The law presumes an accused person to be innocent until the contrary is proved and as such asking him to enter his defence will amount to asking him to prove his innocence," he said.

NEWS**Foreign****Romanian PM ousted in no-confidence vote**

Romanian MPs have voted to remove Prime Minister Llie Bolojan in a no-confidence vote in parliament.

The largest party, the left-wing Social Democrats, abandoned Bolojan's four-party coalition last month and joined the far-right opposition to call for the vote.

The Social Democrats have repeatedly clashed with Bolojan, a liberal, over austerity measures aimed at reducing the budget deficit.

President Nicusor Dan, who is now expected to try to rebuild the coalition un-

der a different prime minister, has sought to give reassurances that Romania - an EU and Nato member which borders Ukraine - will retain its pro-Brussels stance.

A total of 281 MPs voted for the no-confidence motion, well above the 233 needed for the measure to pass.

Elections are not due until 2028, and though a snap poll is unlikely, financial markets are concerned that the turbulence could mean Romania wavers in its commitment to narrowing the EU's biggest budget deficit.

Romania's currency, the leu,

fell to a record low against the euro ahead of Tuesday's vote.

Bolojan's coalition came to power 10 months ago during efforts to curb the rise of the far-right Alliance for Uniting Romanians (AUR), which won one-third of parliamentary seats.

Dan himself won a tense presidential poll last May, after a far-right victory in elections the previous year was annulled over allegations of campaign fraud and Russian interference.

The coalition had started to reduce the deficit but frictions with the Social Democrats grew as the leftists' voter base

was hit by austerity.

The party has said it is prepared to rejoin a pro-EU coalition under a different prime minister.

"Political discussions will be difficult, but it is my responsibility as president - and that of the political parties - to steer Romania in the right direction," Dan told reporters.

The president is now expected to nominate a different member of Bolojan's party, or possibly a technocrat, to lead a new government. Bolojan will continue as caretaker prime minister until it is approved.

Nine coal miners die in gas explosion in Colombia

Nine people have died in an explosion at a coal mine in Colombia in the latest fatal accident to hit the country's mining sector.

Emergency workers said they had rescued six miners from the shafts in Sutatausa, north of the capital, Bogotá.

Colombia's national mining agency said a build-up of gases was thought to have caused the explosion at 16:00 (21:00 GMT) on Monday.

It also published a list of recommendations it said it had made to the mine's operators after an inspection less than a month ago, in which it had warned of a "potentially dangerous gas build-up". Many mines in Colombia are operated informally and without proper safety standards.

The captain of the regional fire department, Álvaro Farfán,

said emergency workers were still working to retrieve the miners' bodies.

Those who survived are being treated in hospital.

Mining accidents are common in Colombia.

Last July, 18 workers were rescued from an unlicensed gold mine after having been trapped underground for 18 hours due to a mechanical failure.

One of the deadliest recent incidents also unfolded in Sutatausa in 2023, when 21 people died in a blast which tore through the tunnels of a complex of coal mines in the area.

That explosion was caused by a build-up of methane gas, investigators said at the time.

Sutatausa has been a coal-mining centre for decades with many of its residents working in the industry.

**ROMANIAN PM:**

Bolojan has clashed with coalition partners over austerity measures

Hantavirus may have spread between passengers on cruise ship, WHO says

The World Health Organization says there may have been rare human-to-human transmission of hantavirus on the Dutch cruise ship where three passengers have died.

The virus is usually spread from rodents, but the WHO said in this instance it could have spread among "really close contacts" aboard the MV Hondius vessel. It stressed the risk to the public was low.

Two crew members - one British and one Dutch - are due to be medically evacuated by aircraft to the Netherlands after displaying "acute respiratory symptoms", the ship's operator Oceanwide Expeditions said.

MV Hondius set sail from Argentina on its voyage across the Atlantic Ocean around a month ago. It is currently anchored near Cape Verde, off Africa's west coast.

Medical teams from Cape Verde, supported by the WHO, have boarded the ship to help with the suspected cases, spokesperson Tarik Yasarevic told the BBC. Testing is taking place for other passengers and

crew members who are displaying symptoms.

Images taken from on board the cruise ship show workers in hazmat suits in a smaller vessel alongside.

Some 149 people from 23 countries remain aboard under "strict precautionary measures", Oceanwide said.

They include around 20 British nationals, according to a UK government spokesperson.

"We do believe that there may be some human-to-human transmission that is happening among the really close contacts," WHO official Dr Maria Van Kerkhove said.

She added that the WHO suspected the first person to fall ill could have contracted the virus before boarding the ship.

Seven cases of hantavirus - two confirmed and five suspected - have so far been identified, according to the latest WHO update.

A person "associated" with the German national who died is due to be medically evacuated alongside the two crew members.

The two confirmed cases are a Dutch woman, who is among

those who died, and a 69-year-old UK national who was evacuated to South Africa for medical treatment.

The woman's husband also died but he is not a confirmed case, nor is the German national who passed away on 2 May.

In a statement, the Dutch couple's family said: "The beautiful journey they experienced together was abruptly and permanently cut short."

"We are still unable to comprehend that we have lost them. We wish to bring them home and commemorate them in peace and privacy," it added.

Investigators are working under the assumption that the Andes strain of the virus, which spreads in South America where the cruise began, has been found in the two confirmed cases.

The organisation was told there were no rats on board, Van Kerkhove said, adding that disinfection was taking place on the ship and those with symptoms or caring for patients were wearing full personal protective equipment.

"Our working hypothesis is that there's probably a couple

of different types of transmission that might be happening," Van Kerkhove told BBC Breakfast on Tuesday.

She noted the cruise had visited many different islands, some of which have rodents, which typically spread the virus through their faeces, saliva or urine.

Argentina on 1 April, a first passenger dies on 11 April, the first passenger's wife leaves the ship at St Helena on 24 April and dies in Johannesburg on 26 April, and another sick man is flown to Johannesburg on 27 April, another passenger dies on board on 2 May, and the ship arrives at Cape Verde on 3 May.

The WHO said Spain has granted permission for the vessel to dock in the Canary Islands, where a risk assessment and further medical monitoring could take place.

But Spain's health ministry has played down speculation that it will take in the ship.

It said in a statement: "Depending on epidemiological data gathered from the boat as it travels past Cape Verde, the most appropriate next stop for it will be decided.

Russian attacks kill at least 20 ahead of rival ceasefires proposed by Kyiv and Moscow

Russian attacks killed at least 20 people across Ukraine on Tuesday ahead of rival unilateral ceasefires proposed separately by Moscow and Kyiv.

Volodymyr Zelensky said five civilians were killed when several Russian glide bombs were dropped on the centre of the city of Kramatorsk, while authorities in the city of Zaporizhzhia said 12 people following a Russian aerial attack.

In Russia, authorities in the Chuvash Republic said two people were killed and 32 injured in a drone attack on Tuesday morning.

On Monday Russia and Ukraine declared unilateral ceasefires ahead of commemorations held by Russia to mark the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany on Saturday.

Russia said it would hold a ceasefire on 8 and 9 May and threatened a "massive missile strike" on central Kyiv if Ukraine violated the truce.

But Kyiv announced it would observe an open-ended ceasefire from midnight on 6 May, and that Ukraine would act "symmetrically" from that point on.

The two ceasefires appear to be unilateral - meaning the two sides have not agreed on their terms, length or monitoring.

Zelensky's chief of staff Kyrylo Budanov said that if the ceasefire announced by the Ukrainian president was reciprocated, "we will continue to observe it... The next move is Russia's".

Zelensky urged Russia to lay down arms and "move to real diplomacy".

"It's utter cynicism to ask for silence to hold propaganda celebrations and to launch such missile-drone attacks every day beforehand," he added.

Ukraine's earlier, open-end-

ed truce is likely a way for Zelensky to show that his country is willing to start an immediate and lasting ceasefire and that any violations will be pinned on Russia.

"We believe that human life is of incomparably greater value than the 'celebration' of any anniversary," he wrote on Telegram.

Ahead of its own midnight ceasefire on Wednesday (Tuesday 22:00 GMT), Ukraine also launched a series of aerial attacks on Russia, hitting an industrial area in Kirishi in the Leningrad region and a factory that produces military components in Cheboksary, in the Chuvash Republic.

Zelensky said domestically-produced Flamingo cruise missiles were used to strike the Cheboksary factory, some 1,500km (930 miles) away from the front line. An unverified nighttime video showed a fast-moving object and large explosion.

The Russian defence ministry later confirmed it had downed six Ukrainian Flamingos as well as 601 drones.

On Tuesday morning, several airports across Russia were temporarily shut. Later, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanyin announced that a number of drones had been downed near the capital.

The Kremlin has betrayed signs of nervousness ahead of Victory Day.

The 9 May celebrations, which mark the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany, have grown in scale and pomp since the start of Vladimir Putin's rule in the early 2000s.

But the Kremlin said that this year the centrepiece event - a grand military parade on Red Square - would be scaled down due to the "terrorist threat" from Ukraine, and that no heavy military hardware would be on display.

Foreign**NEWS****Explosion at China fireworks factory kills 26 people**

An explosion at a fireworks factory in China's Hunan province has killed 26 people and left 61 wounded, according to state media.

Rescue operations have wrapped up at the Huasheng Fireworks plant in the southern city of Liuyang, after an explosion on Monday afternoon forced authorities to evacuate everyone within a 3km (1.9 mile) radius of the plant.

Authorities deployed more than 1,500 emergency responders, along with dogs, drones and robots. They rescued seven people who were trapped under debris.

Police, who are investigating the cause of the blast, have taken "control measures" against the staff in charge of the fireworks company, Chinese state media reported.

Rescue teams had to evacuate everyone within a 3km (1.9mi) radius of the fireworks plant

Authorities said that two gunpowder warehouses within the factory area had posed a high risk amid rescue efforts, state media reported.

Besides evacuating people near the fireworks plant, rescuers also implemented measures like humidifying the area to "prevent secondary accidents during the rescue".

The impact of the blast was so destructive that windows of a nearby residential building were shattered, a CCTV reporter noted in a televised

broadcast from the scene.

The ages of the injured range from their 20s to 60s, and some suffered bone injuries after being hit by flying debris, said the CCTV report.

President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts to search for the missing and save the injured. He also called for an investigation into the accident to hold those responsible to account, state media reported.

Local authorities said on Tuesday that they were monitoring the vicinity's water and air qualities, and that the relevant environmental indicators were normal.

Speaking to Beijing News, a resident who lives about 1km away from the factory said villagers now have to take detours after stones were blasted onto the road.

"The glass windows in our homes were shattered, aluminum window frames were deformed, and even the stainless-steel doors were twisted out of shape," she said.

Another resident told the news outlet that she has left the village out of fear.

Liuyang city is known for fireworks manufacturing, touted in reports as the world's largest producer of fireworks.

Blasts at fireworks factories and shops are not uncommon in China - and are often deadly. In February, 12 people were killed in an explosion at a fireworks store in Hubei province.



KHARTOUM AIRPORT:

Officials say operations at the airport, pictured here in February, have been suspended following the drone strikes

Two killed and many injured after car driven into crowd in German city of Leipzig

Two people are dead and several others injured after a car drove into a crowd in the eastern German city of Leipzig on Monday afternoon, local authorities said.

Leipzig Mayor Burkhard Jung said the suspected perpetrator - who authorities have confirmed is a 33-year-old German citizen - was arrested. Jung added that authorities were not yet clear about a motive.

Police confirmed a car had struck several people in the central Grimmaische Straße area before driving off. Authorities said 22 people were injured, including three seriously.

Michael Kretschmer, the head of the state of Saxony, of which Leipzig is a part, said

the suspect previously suffered from mental illness.

"We are utterly stunned by what has happened. A man has driven at high speed into the shopping area. We are currently mourning two deaths, three people with serious injuries and many others who have been injured," Jung said.

"It is impossible to find the right words to describe this horrific rampage."

Leipzig police spokesperson, Susanne Luebcke, said that at about 17:35 (15:35 GMT) "a person drove a vehicle across Augustusplatz into Grimmaische Street, continuing on past the market".

"Several people were injured in the incident. Unfortunately, we also have to report two fa-

talities," she added.

"We are talking about a case of violent rampage here. We are working on the assumption that this was the act of a lone perpetrator and currently have no indications that there is still a threat to public safety."

The Leipzig's public prosecutor's office confirmed the deceased were a 63-year-old woman and a 77-year-old man, both German citizens.

It said they are investigating the suspect for murder and attempted murder, and that there was "no basis on current knowledge" to suggest there was either a religious or political motive involved.

The car came to a halt near some bollards on Grimmaische Straße. One eyewitness, Susi, told

Radio Leipzig that she was with her friend on a bench on Grimmaische Straße at the time of the incident.

"We heard a loud bang," she said, adding that the driver was going "really fast".

Susi and her friend took refuge in a jewellery shop nearby. When they came out of the store, she said she saw injured people lying on the ground.

Another eyewitness told the same outlet that the car came to a halt at some bollards and a woman fell from the roof of a car. They said passersby went to administer first aid and about 15 people gathered around the car to apprehend the driver and tried to drag him out through an open window.

Nigerians seek return from South Africa amid xenophobia concerns

Nigerians in South Africa are increasingly seeking to return home amid renewed concerns over xenophobic tensions, with officials in Abuja confirming that many of those requesting evacuation lack valid residency documents.

Nigerian foreign ministry spokesperson Kimiebi Ebienufa explained that the voluntary repatriation effort largely involves individuals whose legal status in South Africa has lapsed.

"Those that have indicated interest for a voluntary return to Nigeria are some persons that don't have... the legal requirement to live in South Africa. Maybe those that their visas have expired, or their documentation is not regular," he said.

"Instead of remaining there to be caught up with law enforcement... they are pleading to just leave the country and our missions are taking that up with them."

Recurring incidents

The development comes as tensions rise following reports of anti-immigration protests and the deaths of two Nigeri-

ans in police custody, prompting diplomatic engagement between Abuja and Pretoria.

In Nigeria's capital, residents voiced concern over the recurring nature of such incidents.

Elijah Kadiri urged stronger government action: "What our government has to do, is to liaise with the South African government, and see how they can be able to stop it, because this is not the first time... where they start maltreating foreigners, killing foreigners."

Activists have also criticised what they see as a muted response from South African authorities.

Sydney Usman Godwin said: "For over four months, these xenophobic attacks on Nigerians and other African nationals living in South Africa has not attracted the condemnation of Cyril Ramaphosa."

While South African officials have condemned violence against foreign nationals and pledged action, the situation continues to fuel anxiety among migrant communities, with more Nigerians expected to opt for voluntary return in the coming days

Sudan accuses Ethiopia and UAE of orchestrating drone attacks on airport

Officials say operations at the airport, pictured here in February, have been suspended following the drone strikes

Sudan has accused neighbouring Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of orchestrating drone strikes on its main airport, describing the assault as "direct aggression".

The international airport, located in the capital, was hit on Monday, along with military installations in the Greater Khartoum area.

Recent drone strikes have shattered a period of relative calm in Khartoum, which came after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was pushed out by the Sudanese military last year.

Ethiopia has said accusations that it was involved in the airport attack are "baseless". The UAE has not yet commented, but has previously denied involvement in the Sudanese conflict.

Sudan has recalled its ambassador to Ethiopia for "consultations" over the attack, Foreign Minister Mohieddin Salem said.

No-one was wounded in the attack, Sudan's information minister told the Reuters news agency.

Sudan's army said it had "conclusive evidence" that the drones were launched from Bahir Dar airport in Ethiopia, the state-owned Sudan News Agency (Suna) reported.

Sudanese military officials first accused the RSF of air attacks launched from inside Ethiopian territory in March.

They said they had tracked a drone, identified as Emirati property, entering Sudanese airspace from Ethiopia and eventually shot it down.

A Sudanese army spokesman alleged that they have now connected another drone, launched from the same airport, to Monday's attack.

The UAE has in the past force-

fully rejected claims that it provides military support to the RSF.

The latest attacks came a week after the first direct international commercial flight in three years landed at the airport.

The authorities were forced to announce a 72-hour suspension of operations at the airport following the attacks.

The airport has been a major battleground in the war between the regular army and the RSF, which began in 2023.

In February, Reuters reported that Ethiopia was hosting a camp to train RSF fighters and had upgraded the nearby Asosa airport for drone operations.

It said the move was backed by Ethiopia's close ally, the United Arab Emirates.

Ethiopia denied the reports, as did the UAE.

On Monday, witnesses confirmed to the AFP news agency that they heard blasts and saw smoke rising from an area

near the airport.

The attack is reported to have also caused minor damage to an administrative building.

The information ministry said the airport would return to operations after routine safety procedures.

Sudan's foreign minister alleged that the drones had taken off from Ethiopia, despite Ethiopia being a "brotherly state" to Sudan. He said the UAE and Ethiopia had chosen the "wrong path" and would regret it.

Ethiopia's foreign ministry said on Tuesday that Sudan and Ethiopia "share a historic and enduring bond of friendship" and had "refrained from publicising the grave violations of Ethiopia's territorial integrity and national security committed by some belligerents in the Sudanese civil war".

The ministry called for dialogue between the warring parties in Sudan.

Sports

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

Lagos'll meet sports infrastructure demands of 2026/2027 football season —Orimoloye

The Senior Special Assistant to the Lagos State Governor on Sports, Damilare Orimoloye, on Tuesday said the state would be ready for the sports infrastructure demands of the 2026/2027 football season.

Orimoloye made the assertion in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) against the backdrop of Lagos State fielding three professional clubs in next season's Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL).

Lagos State will be fielding three professional clubs for the 2026/2027 NPFL season, with two additional clubs, Inter FC of Lagos and Sporting Lagos FC gaining promotion to the elite league.

Inter Lagos FC is a debutant in the premier league, while Sporting Lagos FC returns to the fold after two years.

However, there has been growing concern about the over-dependence on the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan Stadium, which is currently the only functional stadium for all football teams in Lagos, both male and female.

At present, Lagos has more than six professional teams in top-flight football sharing the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, underscoring the need for addi-

tional stadiums.

It would be recalled that Lagos boasts four stadia, namely: the derelict National Stadium, Teslim Balogun Stadium, which has been closed for upgrades for the past six years.

And the Agege Township Stadium, which has also been undergoing renovations for the last five years.

Speaking on getting the stadium ready ahead of the demands of the new season, Orimoloye assured that the Agege Township Stadium would be ready, noting that renovation works have reached an advanced stage.

"We have resumed frantic work on Agege Stadium. I was there yesterday to inspect the ongoing renovation, and I can say that the turf has been laid.



DAMILARE ORIMOLOYE



GOVERNOR CHUKWUMA SOLUDO

Soludo scraps Anambra sports commission

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra has scrapped the Anambra State Sports Development Commission (ASSDC) and re-instated the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports.

This was confirmed in the 18-man Commissioner nominees list sent by Soludo to the Anambra House of Assembly on Tuesday for screening.

Patrick Aghamba has been nominated as Commissioner for the newly merged ministry.

Aghamba was the commissioner for Youth Empowerment in Soludo's first term.

The Anambra Sports Development Commission was separated from the ministry and established as an independent department

under the administration of Chief Willie Obiano in 2018.

Tony Oli served as the pioneer chairman, while Patrick Onyedum was the second and immediate past chairman.

Some of the former Commissioners who made the new list are Mr Izuchukwu Okafor (Finance), Dr Afam Obidike (Health), Dr Law Mefor (Information and Value Reformation) and Prof. Ofornze Amucheazi (Lands).

Others are Dr Ben-Chuks Odoemena (Agriculture), Mr Chukwukadibia Okoye (Budget and Economic Planning), Mr Udoji Amedu (Culture, Entertainment and Tourism), Dr Ekene Ogugua (Education) and Dr Clem Aguiyi (Environment).

NSC chairman applauds impact of women in Nigerian Sports as Commission inaugurates Nigeria Netball Federation

The immense contributions of women in the nation's sports development was once more on the front burner as the National Sports Commission on Tuesday May 5, inaugurated the board of the Nigeria Netball Federation.

In his speech at the event, the NSC Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko pointed out that the desire to get the NNF up and running was fuelled by the fact that women had always hoisted the nation's flag high in global sporting events.

His words, "We are just coming from the African Wrestling Championships where Nigeria emerged tops with the women winning the majority of the medals. Even at the just concluded World Athletics Relays, it was the women that put smiles on our faces. The impact of women in our sports is largely felt across all sports. When the women are on parade, we go to sleep, rest assured that they will deliver.

"I am pleased to see seventy percent of this Federation made up of women. This is a sport that will empower women. When we came into the Commission, we got calls from prominent Nigerians who wanted us to give more prominence to netball, a sport that we should have a comparative advantage of if well harnessed



NSC CHAIRMAN MALLAM SHEHU DIKKO, INAUGURATES NIGERIA NETBALL FEDERATION

NWFL MD 18: Edo Queens host Rivers Angels in final regular league game

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL), regular season comes to an end tomorrow, former Champions Edo Queens FC will be locking horns

with their South-South arch-rivals Rivers Angels FC of Port Harcourt in Match day 18 derby to wrap up the 2025/26 (NWFL) premiers regular season.

The regular season ending game is scheduled to hold at the

Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium Benin City. Kickoff time is 4PM.

Edo Queens, having played a 1-1 draw with Ibom Angels at home last week Wednesday, the coach Moses Aduku - led Queens, no doubt will come all out, against Rivers Angels in as they will be desperate to end the season on a positive note despite being qualified for the Super 6 long before now

This highly anticipated premier league game between Edo Queens and Rivers Angels on Wednesday promises to be most likely a pre-Super 6 rehearsal game as both teams get ready for yet another titanic battle in the Super 6 title campaign.



EDO QUEENS AND RIVERS ANGELS

Edun propels Nigerian Boxers ahead of Ghana friendly

The president of the Nigeria Boxing Federation (NBF) Hon. Wale Edun has urged Nigerian boxers to give a good account of themselves in Thursday's friendly tournament against their Ghanaian counterparts in Accra.

Edun gave the charge in his message to the pugilists at the

National camp in Lagos on Monday. He encouraged the boxers to stay focused in their training and be worthy ambassadors of the country in their trip to Ghana.

In his words: Firstly, I want you all to be conscious of our national flag which you carry, you must do so with pride, the rivalry between

Nigeria and Ghana has no exception, despite being a friendly match you must fight for the pride of our nation". Edun told the team.

The seventeen (17) man contingent, which consists of boxers, coaches, and officials, will depart for Accra via the Murtala Muhammed Interna-

tional Airport Lagos at 7:00 am on Wednesday May 6th.

The bilateral tournament aimed to assess both countries' athletes' performance and readiness ahead of the 2026 Commonwealth Games will be held this Thursday at the Accra Sports Stadium.

Wrestling: World next stage for Nigeria —Adeniyi

The President of the Nigeria Wrestling Federation (NWF), Adewale Adeniyi, said the world is now the next stage for Nigeria, with the women wrestlers targeting gold at the championship.

The women wrestlers recorded their 15th African Wrestling title on Saturday at the just concluded African Wrestling Championships in Alexandria, Egypt.

Adeniyi told NAN that the overall performance of Team Nigeria at the championship was as a result of consolidating on the country's comparative advantage, which is women wrestling.

"We are taking it as a responsibility to Nigerians that having

conquered Africa through the women and made this massive improvement with the men,

"The world is now the next stage for us and we will do our best to keep flying the country's flag with pride and dignity," he said.

The president said the Federation will build on the achievements of the boys in Alexandria after they won 6 medals out of the 8 male athletes who travelled to Egypt.

"What we have done with the boys shows that we can do better than what we have done before. We would go back to re-strategise and see how we can build on this success with the boys.



ADEWALE ADENIYI

Enabulele hosts AFFAN, reaffirms commitment to encouraging women's participation in sports development

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, on Tuesday received the leader-

ship of the Association of Former Female Athletes of Nigeria (AFFAN) during a courtesy visit to him in his office.

The leader of the delegation and the state coordinator of the association Mrs. Abudu Faith

said the visit was aimed at briefing the Commission chairman on their activities and to explore areas of collaboration to advance sports development, particularly for women in Edo State.

Receiving the AFFAN's

Executive , Hon. Enabulele welcomed the initiative and reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to promoting female participation in sports.

The Edo State Sports Commission boss disclosed that a dedicated committee has already been instituted to drive the process of the policies and programs that encourage women's involvement in sports, noting that AFFAN's experience and network would be of immense value to the efforts of the Edo State Sports Commission in achieving its purpose

"We are open to collaboration, especially in initiatives that empower female athletes and strengthen grassroots sports development," Enabulele said.



The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele hosts Association of Former Female Athletes of Nigeria (AFFAN).

Qualifying for the 2027 World Athletics Championship relays, a major milestone in my life —Nwankwo

An influential member of the victorious Team Nigeria to the World Athletics Relays Championship in Botswana, Rosemary Nwankwo, has described her precious ticket to the World Athletics Championships as a major milestone.

She stated that competing on such a grand stage and securing the ticket to the World Championship are one of the best things to ever happen to her in athletics.

She made this public in an interview with AFN Media Hub in Gaborone, Botswana.

To achieve this milestone, Rosemary Nwankwo, had to overcome some hurdles within the team, that of not handling the baton properly could have hampered their ability to succeed.

"I feel so good because this is my first biggest tournament since I started athletics and I'm so grateful to God.

"What happened here yesterday (Saturday) is nobody's fault, but thank God we had another opportunity to run again today and we have qualified so I'm so excited.

"We just told ourselves that we can do this, let's forget about that and focus on the one ahead of us. My experience has been great," she said.

100 metres sprinter, known nationwide for her consistency and ability to win races, went on to describe what was going through her mind during the race.

"During the race I was not looking at anyone, in my head it was about what I could give to help my team succeed, I wasn't concerned whether this one is faster than this one, I just ran with all I had, I gave my very best," she explained.



TEAM NIGERIA

D'Tigress' USA tour: Despite losses, our girls're on the right path —Ugo Udezue

Nigeria's senior women's national basketball team, D'Tigress, just concluded a playing tour of the USA, after playing against top rated WNBA teams, a first-ever by any African team, in preparations for the FIFA Women's

World Cup, coming up September in Berlin, Germany.

The highly rated Nigerian girls played three high profiled games losing against Los Angeles Sparks, Minnesota Lynx and Indiana Fever respectively.

Speaking with NBBF media

team after the tour, former NBA players agent, board member and chairman of the NBBF marketing committee, Ugo Udezue, waxed lyrical about the chances of the team ahead of the FIBA Women's World Cup.

"The just-concluded U.S. tour was exactly what D'Tigress needed at this stage of our journey. A high-level, high-pressure environment that tested our depth, exposed new talent, and reinforced our identity as a global team.

"While some may focus on results, we are focused on growth, cohesion, and long-term dominance. This tour has given us clarity, confidence, and a renewed belief in the direction we are heading."



D'TIGRESS

Kano to host NSSF/Milo Inter-Secondary Schools Basketball Championship

The Kano State Government has concluded all arrangements for hosting a successful 2026 Inter-Secondary Schools Savannah Conference Basketball Championship for boys and girls in the State. The championship is scheduled to hold from May 6 to 13, 2026.

The championship is expected to attract participation from ten states, including Adama-

wa, Borno, Taraba, Zamfara, Bauchi, Yobe, Katsina, Gombe, and the host state, Kano.

Speaking on the preparations, the Head of Schools Sports at the State Ministry of Education, Malam Kabiru Shehu, stated that officials of the Nigerian School Sports Federation, the competition sponsors Nestlé Milo, and the host committee have been working

tirelessly to ensure a smooth and hitch-free championship.

While commending Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf and commissioner of education Gwani Ali Haruna Makoda as well as other stakeholders for their commitment and support, he called on the participating states to give the organizers all maximum support and co-operation towards the success

of the tournament.

The winners for both boys and girls would proceed to Lagos for the final stage of the competition schedule to hold later in the year.

Similarly, the President of the Nigerian School Sports Federation NSSF, Mrs Olabisi Joseph has announced other three hosting Conference states namely: Kwara, Oyo and Delta.



BRIGHT OZADEGBE

Ikorodu City focused on securing continental slot —Ozadegbe

Bright Ozadegbe, Technical Adviser of Ikorodu City FC, has reaffirmed the team's determination to secure a continental slot as the 2025/2026 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season draws to a close.

Ozadegbe, who said this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Monday in Lagos ahead of their clash with Wikki Tourists, said the team would remain resolute in spite of the challenges posed by the remaining fixtures.

The Oga Boys are currently fifth on the NPFL table with 55 points from 35 matches, level on points

with fourth-placed Bendel Insurance FC, who have a goal advantage, but with a game in hand.

Ikorodu City were already leading 3-1 against relegation-threatened Wikki Tourists on Match Day 36 at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan, Lagos, as at the time of filing this report.

The Ozadegbe-tutored side will have the opportunity to reclaim third position with a victory over the Bauchi-based team.

The soft-spoken coach emphasised the importance of approaching the remaining fixtures with caution and focus, starting with the clash against Wikki Tourists.

Shaibu urges greater synergy between NIS, NSC

Philip Shaibu, Director -General (DG) of the National Institute for Sports (NIS), has called for greater synergy between the Institute and the National Sports Commission (NSC).

Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday, Shaibu decried the lack of collaboration among key organisations responsible for the development of sports in the country.

He noted that the NSC, NIS, and the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) are recognised by law and should work together.

"Among the agencies recognised by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, through various bills, are the NSC, NIS, and the NFF.

"These are the three main parastatals recognised in the sports sector, especially with

the suspension of the Federal Ministry of Sports.

"Other bodies are federations, except the NFF, which is recognised as a parastatal.

"As we speak today, there is no coordination among these three arms of the sports sector. We do not hold meetings.

"Since I became NIS DG, we have not had any major meeting to discuss the Renewed Hope Agenda of Mr. President, Bola Tinubu.

"I have made several attempts and have personally visited to bring everyone together so we can address the issues affecting our sports sector.

"It appears as though we are only aware of each other through the media—when you hear that the NSC is doing one thing and the NIS is doing another," he said.



PHILIP SHAIBU

FEATURE



EKPOMA kidnap: Misplaced narratives, and the need for fair public discourse over security in Edo

PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE PHD

The recent tragic killing of Citizen Justin Otene in Ekpoma has understandably stirred grief. He was a businessman, a community member, and by all accounts, a hardworking Nigerian whose life was cut short in a violent incident that has no place in any civilised society like ours is trying to become. The sympathy of the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo remains firmly with his family, friends, and the entire community.

For the records, in the immediate aftermath of the incident, Governor Monday Okpebholo's response was swift. Security agencies were promptly mobilised to Ekpoma and adjoining communities, with clear directives to intensify surveillance, track down the perpetrators, and prevent any escalation of tension. Tactical deployments were reinforced, intelligence gathering was activated, and inter-agency coordination was strengthened to ensure that the incident was not only addressed but contained.

This response reflects the Governor's philosophy which is rooted in action. It also reflects his recognition that security challenges demand immediacy, coordination, and sustained operational attention. As the Governor has repeatedly said, Edo is safe but that is not the absence of occasional incidents. Nevertheless under his leadership the government continues to prioritise the protection of lives and property across all parts of the state, even within the constraints of Nigeria's broader security architecture, which remains centrally structured and often stretched across multiple fronts.

Unfortunately, in the wake of this tragedy, public commentary on some national media platforms has introduced very false narratives that risk oversimplifying a complex security situation. Of a truth constructive criticism remains a vital part of democratic accountability, but it must be grounded in context, accuracy, and a fair appreciation of realities.

Take for example the position advanced by the likes of Oseni Rufai in his commentary on the Arise Television Morning Show. While the intent is analysis, unfortunately it gravitated as expected toward a generalised interpretation that did not adequately reflect the multi-layered nature of security governance in Edo State. By drawing sweeping conclusions from a single tragic incident, the Rufai's porous commentary risked reducing a complex operational challenge to a simplified political indictment. Such cheap frames, perhaps intended to provoke debate, does not often ful-



EKPOMA PROTESTERS

ly account for the inherited security conditions, the limitations of subnational policing, and the ongoing reforms currently being implemented by the state government.

Mr Rufai ought to know that security management in any state cannot be divorced from the realities of federal policing structures, intelligence-sharing constraints, and long-standing infrastructural gaps. To ignore these factors is to present an incomplete picture. Responsible analysis ought to be able to distinguish between isolated criminal incidents and the broader trajectory of governance responses that are actively evolving.

Interestingly and in contrast, the intervention by Dr. Reuben Abati offered a more balanced and contextually informed perspective. Drawing from his extensive experience in journalism and governance analysis, Dr. Abati approached the same issue with the caution it deserves, clarity, and an evident appreciation of institutional complexity. He acknowledged the seriousness of the Ekpoma incident, no doubt, but without resorting to sweeping generalisations, like his colleague. Abati's situation of his analysis within the broader framework of Nigeria's security governance challenges is commendable.

His commentary recognised the limitations under which state governments operate while still affirming the necessity of accountability. This dual recognition — of constraint

and responsibility — reflects the kind of measured public discourse that strengthens democratic engagement rather than distorting it. In doing so, Dr. Abati upheld the standard expected of better informed and experienced media practitioners whose influence extends beyond commentary into public perception shaping.

Governor Okpebholo considers such balanced perspectives essential, particularly in moments of public sensitivity. He knows that media platforms wield significant influence. He expects that with that influence comes the responsibility to ensure that analysis does not inadvertently inflame tensions or misrepresent ongoing institutional efforts.

The Okpebholo administration has not been passive in the face of inse-

The government recognises that safeguarding such a location requires sustained investment, not episodic intervention.

curity. Under his SHINE agenda, security is the first project. Hence the government has pursued a structured security agenda that so far has include strengthened legal frameworks against kidnapping and cult-related activities, enhanced collaboration with federal security agencies, and improved deployment of local security architecture to vulnerable communities.

These interventions are ongoing operational measures designed to progressively reduce criminal activity and improve response efficiency. While results in security governance are rarely immediate, the direction of policy remains focused, deliberate, and continuously reinforced.

Ekpoma, located in the governor's senatorial district, remains a strategic priority due to its demographic and institutional significance. As the home of Ambrose Alli University, it represents a critical hub of education, commerce, and youth activity. The government recognises that safeguarding such a location requires sustained investment, not episodic intervention. The deployment of security personnel following the recent incident is therefore part of a broader strategy aimed at stabilising the area and restoring public confidence.

It is within this context that public commentary must be situated. Governance, especially in security matters, cannot be accurately assessed through isolated incidents devoid of structural understanding. Nor should

tragedy be used as a vehicle for conclusions that disregard ongoing efforts, however imperfect they may be.

The responsibility of leadership is to act decisively in moments of crisis while maintaining long-term strategies that address root causes. Governor Okpebholo's administration has continued to demonstrate both commitments — immediate response when incidents occur, and sustained policy engagement aimed at preventing recurrence.

As Edo State mourns the loss of Mr. Justin Otene, it is equally important that public discourse remains anchored in fairness. Constructive criticism is welcome and necessary, but it must be separated from interpretations that obscure ongoing efforts or misrepresent the realities of governance under challenging conditions.

Ultimately, the goal is shared by all stakeholders: a safer Edo State where communities like Ekpoma can thrive without fear. Achieving this requires cooperation between government, security agencies, communities, and the media — each playing its role with responsibility and balance.

The Okpebholo administration remains fully committed to this objective, and it will continue to act with urgency, clarity, and determination in addressing security concerns wherever they arise.

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