

Edo Govt unveils simplified disability rights law

The Edo State Government has unveiled a simplified version of its disability rights law for persons living with disabilities across the 18 local government areas of the state.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, the Secretary to the State Government, Mr Musa Umar Ikhlilor, said the initiative was aimed at strengthening the protection of the rights

and dignity of persons with disabilities in the state.

Ikhlilor, who was represented by the Acting Permanent Secretary, Mr Ohunyon Ekikiyoa, noted that the strength of any society lies not only in its physical structures but also in the extent to which it guarantees equal opportunities for all citizens.

The programme was organised by the Edo State Com-

mission for Persons with Disabilities, with support from the Network for the Advancement of People with Disabilities and the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Programme.

According to him, laws are enacted to protect rights, guide conduct, and promote justice, but their true value lies not only in their enactment but also in their accessibility and

practical application.

"The simplification of the disability rights law is a thoughtful and commendable initiative aimed at ensuring that its provisions are better understood by citizens, particularly persons with disabilities and their families.

"By doing so, we are strengthening public awareness, encouraging compliance, and empowering citizens with the

knowledge required to claim and protect their rights within the framework of the law.

"The Edo State Government remains resolute in its commitment to fostering an inclusive society where persons with disabilities are not viewed through the lens of dependency or limitation," he said.

He commended the Edo State Commission for Persons with

Disabilities for its advocacy and commitment to advancing disability inclusion in the state.

In his goodwill message, Mr Melody Omosah, Executive Director of the Network for the Advancement of People with Visible Disabilities (NAPVID), advocated the establishment of radio programmes to promote public awareness of disability rights.

Omosah, while highlighting Section 18 of the state disabili-

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

f t i g NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,278

FRIDAY 5TH JUNE, 2026.

#200

Senate approves higher sugar tax

- **Creates health fund to tackle rising non-communicable diseases**
- **Tinubu appoints Zainab Marwa as NDDC Board member**

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Nigerian Senate has approved a new excise duty regime on sugar-sweetened beverages and endorsed the establishment of a dedicated funding mechanism to support public health interventions aimed at combating non-communicable diseases (NCDs) across Nigeria.

The decision followed the adoption of the report on the Customs, Excise Tariff, etc.

(Amendment) Bill presented during plenary by the Joint Committee on Finance and Customs, Excise and Tariff.

Presenting the report, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, said the new framework would replace the existing flat-rate excise duty of N10 per litre on sugar-sweetened beverages with a percentage-based levy linked to retail prices.

According to him, the levy structure will be determined by the Minister of Finance in line with international best

practices and prevailing economic realities.

Musa explained that the current tax regime has been weakened by inflation and no longer provides an effective deterrent against excessive consumption of sugary drinks or generates sufficient revenue to address the growing health burden associated with such products.

He expressed concern over

the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, obesity, hypertension and cardiovascular ailments, many of which have been linked to excessive sugar consumption and unhealthy dietary habits.

The senator noted that the rising incidence of these diseases is placing additional pressure on Nigeria's healthcare system,

which remains underfunded and heavily dependent on out-of-pocket spending by citizens.

"The current excise structure has lost much of its effectiveness due to inflationary pressures. A more responsive and sustainable framework is needed both to influence consumer behaviour and to generate resources for public health interventions," he said.

Following deliberations, the Senate directed the Minister of Finance to develop an appropriate levy structure that aligns

with global standards while supporting Nigeria's broader health and fiscal policy objectives.

The upper chamber also approved the creation of a dedicated health fund to strengthen efforts aimed at preventing and managing non-communicable diseases nationwide.

Lawmakers further recommended stronger enforcement mechanisms for excise duty collection, continuous engagement with industry stakehold-

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

Police debunk alleged release of kidnapped pupils/teachers

- **Intensifying rescue efforts**

OYO

The Oyo Police Command has dismissed as false, misleading and entirely unsubstantiated, the messages currently circulating on various social media platform, insisting that security agencies are making continuing efforts to secure the release of the abductees.

The police update comes amidst increasing speculations alleging that the pupils and teachers have been released.

In a statement issued on Thursday by the Police Public Relations Officer, Olayinka

Ayanlade, the command urged members of the public to disregard the viral message.

The command said security operatives are working tirelessly, deploying all available resources to ensure the safe rescue of the victims and arrest of those responsible.

The state reads in part: "Security operatives are working tirelessly, deploying all available human and operational resources to ensure the rescue of the abducted pupils and teachers, their reunification with their families, and the apprehension and pros-

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



UNVEILING CEREMONY:

Representative of the Secretary to Edo State Government, Mr. Ohunyon Ekikiyoa, acting Permanent Secretary, middle and others displaying the disability rights law, at the unveiling ceremony in Benin City.

Ramat Park flyover:
Evoking a city of beauty, splendour and modernity

—Pg 4

Itsekiri leaders fault INEC ward delineation exercise, seek FG's intervention

—Pg 5

Germany blames Russia for 'bitter defeat' in UN Security Council bid

—Pg 15

President FedCup 2026: Bendel Insurance FC set for round 16 clash with El-Kanemi Warriors

—Pg 22

Cultism eradication: Okaighele lauds Gov. Okpebholo, Benin monarch's commitment

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo has been commended for his stance and commitment to eradicate cultism and other related vices across the State.

The Okaighele of Iguovbiobo community, Comrade Austin Evbuomwan gave the

commendation recently while speaking to journalists after an enlarged meeting of the youths from the community.

He said the meeting was convened to advise and at the same time, caution the youths in the community against getting themselves involved in cultism and other related criminal acts.

Comrade Evbuomwan

stressed that rather than use their precious time to get involved in cultism, the community youths should rather rediscover themselves and engage in very meaningful ventures that will be of benefit to them and the community as a whole.

He described as "bold and unwavering" the commitment and concern of His Excellency,

the Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo to rid the State of cultists and other criminal elements, saying it is both timely and a welcome development which must be supported by all, because the destruction of lives and properties by the cultists as a result of battle for supremacy was giving the State a very bad name, thus scaring away poten-

tial investors who wish to invest in the State

Comrade Austin Evbuomwan appreciated the Governor for setting up a committee charged to chase and neutralise criminal elements away from the state, noting that before the administration came on board it was like living in a jungle where everyone was a suspect.

He, however, used the occasion to appreciate the Committee chairman and members for the great work they are doing in ensuring that cultism and other vices are reduced to the barest minimum.

The Okaighele equally thanked and appreciated His

Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin for his fatherly approach and wisdom in handling the multi-faceted challenges across communities in Benin kingdom.



EVBUOMWAN



RENEWED PARTNERSHIP:

Delegation of Edo Office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), led by the state Resident Electoral Commissioner, Hon. Obo Effiang, on a courtesy visit to the Edo state Police Command. They were received by the state Commissioner of Police, Monday Agbonika (4th r).

Edo Govt committed to sustainable waste management practices

BENIN CITY

Edo State Waste Management Board, in a bid to consolidate their gains recorded so far has introduced EWMB Academy which hopes to bring on board an educational behavioral change platform.

The Director of Admin and Supply, EWMB Idighe Osagie who read the opening address on behalf of Dr. Lucky Enehita-Inegbenehi made this disclosure during the official unveiling of

the Edo State Waste Management Board Academy in Benin City.

He said the event marks another giant stride in the innovative and transformative approach of the Waste Management Board.

He further said that the board has revolutionised waste evacuation by implementing 24 hours evacuation, adding that monitoring and surveillance programmes in major hub like markets and other commercial areas remain tidy and safe for

daily traders and customers.

The MD also said that the board's activities have been greatly enhanced with the state of the art waste management facilities provided by the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Some of these facilities include brand new Bulldozers, Pay loaders, Dump trucks and low bed trailers.

He said moving beyond basic trash collection, the board has championed initiatives to convert waste to wealth, protecting communities from plastic pollution and laying the groundwork

for a secular economy.

Dr. Enehita-Inegbenehi also disclosed that the establishment of the academy further demonstrates a forward-thinking vision of the board aimed at strengthening proper waste management and environmental sanitation practices through education, training and community engagement.

He said the board has no doubt that the academy would serve as a platform for equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, discipline and responsibility required to a cleaner and healthier society.

Edo police begin manhunt for blogger, "Azawoman," over fake kidnap report

BENIN CITY

The police command in Edo has commenced steps to apprehend a blogger, known as 'Azawoman' for allegedly originating a false report that students of Green Park Academy in Benin were kidnapped.

The command said that the fake report originator is wanted for questioning and possible prosecution in accordance with extant laws.

The command's Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, said this in a statement in Benin, describing the report as false and very mis-

leading.

Recall that the kidnapping claim emerged from a viral social media video by a woman popularly known as "Azawoman," who alleged that students of Green Park Academy, Aduwawa, Benin City were abducted while returning from their Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination.

The claim quickly gained traction online, triggering anxiety among parents and residents.

Ikoedem said investigations showed that no kidnapping incident occurred at the school, describing the report as a deliberate attempt to mislead the general public and create panic.

According to her, the allegation was propagated on social media by a woman popularly known as "Azawoman".

"Following a thorough verification and preliminary investigation by the command, it has been established that no kidnapping incident occurred at the school as alleged.

"Findings reveal that the report is entirely false, lacks any factual basis, and was deliberately disseminated to misinform the public and create unwarranted panic within the state," she said.

The police public relations officer condemned what it described as the reckless spread

of false information capable of undermining public confidence and diverting attention from genuine security concerns.

She warned that the dissemination of fake security alerts constituted a threat to public order and would not be tolerated.

"Consequently, the command has commenced steps to apprehend the originator of the false report for questioning and possible prosecution in accordance with extant laws," she stated.

She quoted the Commissioner of Police, Monday Agbonika, as reassuring residents that the security situation in Edo remained under control.

Oba of Benin approves Pa Eresuwa as Odionwere of Erua

BENIN CITY

The Palace of the Oba of Benin has approved the position of Odionwere of Erua in Uhumwode local government area to Pa Peter Osakue Eresuwa, the most elderly man in the community now holds the traditional position

The Odionwere on the 22nd Day of May 2026 performed the necessary traditional rites with the Okaighele with the support of the elders, Mr Osamuyi David Okunoghae to go round the stipulated shrines according to custom and tradition

Pa Eresuwa after performing the traditional rites (Ulamwen) appreciated the great Oba of Benin kingdom for his wisdom in attending to issues affecting communities and his stance in ensuring that peace reign in the communities and the state as a whole

He also commended the good people of Erua community for standing by the truth even in the face of intimidation and appealed to them to join him in ensuring that there is peace in the community adding that where there is no peace meaningful development will not take place.

Wife of suspected drug trafficker submits fake death affidavit in court

BENIN CITY

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State Command, has re-arrested and brought before the Federal High Court in Benin City a suspected drug trafficker, Ibrahim Yusuf Lawal, 50 years old, who had earlier jumped bail and whose wife fraudulently submitted an affidavit claiming he had died while they were living together at Iruvuchebe, Okene, Kogi State.

NDLEA Edo State commander, Commander of Narcotics Mitchell Ofoyeju PhD, disclosed that Lawal was originally arrested on February 5, 2022, at Ugbekun Junction, Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, while transporting various quantities of psychotropic substances. He was found in possession of 0.257kg of Lexotan, 1kg of Diazepam, and 5.4kg of Phenobarbital, all concealed in a white Toyota bus with registration number Abuja BWR401XC.

Ibrahim was subsequently charged on a three-count charge of unlawful transportation of controlled substances, contrary to the NDLEA Act Cap N30, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004. Count

one specifically stated that Ibrahim Yusuf Lawal, on or about the 5th day of February 2022, without lawful authority, transported 0.257kg of Lexotan, a psychotropic substance similar to cocaine, heroin, and LSD.

After pleading not guilty to the charges, Lawal was granted bail by the court. However, he absconded and failed to appear for his trial. In a desperate attempt to evade justice, his wife, one Ibrahim Nana Hawa, swore to an Affidavit of Facts as to the Demise of the Husband, dated October 2024, claiming that Lawal had died on October 3, 2024, following a protracted illness diagnosed as tuberculosis. The affidavit, which was submitted to the court, stated that she was a citizen of Nigeria residing in Iruvuchebe, Okene Local Government Area, Kogi State, and that the husband was buried according to their religious rites.

The NDLEA, upon receiving this information, launched a thorough investigation. In the words of Commander Mitchell, "Our operatives, working on an intelligence report, uncovered the truth that Ibrahim Yusuf Lawal was very much alive. He was recently apprehended in a covert operation and taken into custody."

Opinion

2027: How surprises await strange bedfellows politicians in Nigeria



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

When a revered general overseer of a Pentecostal Church prophesied that 2027 will be a year of surprises, some people may have wondered what kind of surprises is the man of God really talking about which is not common to Nigerians.

In his characteristic manner, not known to be verbose, the cleric simply said surprises await those who are dreaming of unsettling a sitting president that is working hard to give Nigerians the dividends of democracy.

The man of God was referring to those strange bedfellows retired politicians ganging up in a political party

These are known persons who have occupied one position or the other and they could not do anything meaningful for those who voted for them.

Instead, they made life unbearable for the people and according to the cleric they will be dumb founded and surprised with the results of the Presidential election 2027.

For clarity sake, the synonyms of the word surprise include shock, revelation, bolt from the blue, bombshell, blow and astonishment.

Nevertheless, surprise is a two edged sword because the administration of Bola Tinubu, a man who was in the trenches and on exile from his father's land for his active role to ensure de-

mocracy thrives in the nation is determined not to disappoint his people

After a careful study of the prediction for 2027, Nigerians should be weary of such strange bedfellows Politicians who are only interested about what they get thereby making life miserable for the people

The country has weathered through all kinds of storms in the past, yet we are still surviving as a nation and the problem has been more of a lack of genuine leaders in power.

The Lord Almighty has always been very generous to the nation and there are strong indications that there will be light at the end of the tunnel when the people rise to do what is right

by allowing President Tinubu to consolidate what he has started across the nation.

Now, with the large army of supporters growing in the Renewed Hope Partners RHP, and other support groups across the country for President Tinubu It must be noted that right thinking Nigerians are appreciating what the administration is doing so far.

In Edo State, the action Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has displayed practical governance with projects and policies that are transforming the state into a construction site and a destination for investors.

Edo people are testifying that the Project SHINE agenda of Governor Okpebholo is making an indelible impact on the people and thanks to President Tinubu for his support.

Senator Okpebholo has also demonstrated respect for political leaders, traditional institutions, and the people in general with his humble style of leadership.

When the mantle of leadership fell on the lap of President Tinubu and Senator Okpebholo, they assured the people that all will soon be well in just a matter of time.

From the way Governor Okpebholo has fared so far in less than a year and six months in office, and the achievements of President Tinubu across the country the people are convinced that these are leaders prepared for governance.

After a careful study of the prediction for 2027, Nigerians should be weary of such strange bedfellows Politicians who are only interested about what they get thereby making life miserable for the people

Let human intelligence lead not AI



OBOH SYLVESTER

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed the way people work, communicate, learn, and conduct business. From automated customer service to self-driving vehicles and sophisticated content-generation tools. AI has become an integral part of modern society.

While these innovations offer undeniable benefits, there is an increasing need to recognise that human intelligence remains irreplaceable and indispensable.

Artificial Intelligence is designed to mimic certain aspects of human thinking. It can process vast amounts of data, identify patterns, and perform repetitive tasks with remarkable speed and accuracy.

However, AI lacks the qualities that define humanity—wisdom, empathy, moral judgment, creativity rooted in lived experience, and the ability to understand complex social and cultural contexts.

For the purpose of emphasis, one of the greatest strengths of human intelligence is critical thinking. Human beings can analyse situations, past or present, beyond data and algorithms.

They can interpret emotions, understand nuances, and make decisions based on ethical con-

siderations.

While AI can recommend a course of action, it cannot fully comprehend the human consequences of that decision.

In matters involving justice, governance, healthcare, education, and community development, human judgment remains essential.

In addition, the growing dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) also raises concerns about the erosion of human skills.

As machines increasingly perform tasks that once required human effort, people may become less inclined to develop problem-solving abilities, creativity, and interpersonal skills. Societies that rely excessively on technology risk producing generations that consume information without questioning it and follow automated

recommendations without critical independent thought.

Education provides a clear example. AI tools can assist students in research and learning, but they cannot replace the role of teachers in mentoring, inspiring, and shaping character.

True education is not merely the transfer of information; it is the development of values, discipline, leadership, and emotional intelligence. These can be regarded as qualities that emerge from human interaction rather than machine computation.

Similarly, leadership requires human intelligence. Effective leaders must understand the aspirations, fears, and emotions of the people they serve.

They must make difficult decisions that bal-

ance competing interests while considering ethical and social implications. No system, not even AI can fully replicate the compassion, accountability, and vision required for responsible leadership.

The workplace is another area where human intelligence remains vital. While AI can automate routine tasks, innovation often arises from human curiosity, collaboration, and imagination. History's greatest discoveries and achievements were not merely the result of data analysis; they emerged from human potential to question existing assumptions and visualise new possibilities.

Moreover, the unchecked expansion of AI poses risks related to privacy, misinformation, and employment displacement.

Moreover, human intelligence is needed to establish appropriate regulations, ethical standards, and safeguards that ensure technology serves humanity rather than otherwise. The future should not and must never be a contest between humans and machines, but a partnership in which technology enhances human capabilities without diminishing human dignity and its intelligence.

The real challenge, therefore, is to ensure that human intelligence evolves alongside artificial intelligence. Universal societies must invest in education, never undermine critical thinking, but regulate ethical leadership, creativity, and emotional intelligence. These human characteristics will remain the foundation of progress regardless of technological advancement.

No matter how powerful the Artificial Intelligence is, it is only a tool. Therefore, the future of civilisation depends not on the intelligence of machines but on the wisdom of human beings who create, manage, and apply them.

In an age increasingly defined by processes, the world must never lose sight of the enduring value of human intelligence.

human intelligence is needed to establish appropriate regulations, ethical standards, and safeguards that ensure technology serves humanity rather than otherwise. The future should not and must never be a contest between humans and machines, but a partnership in which technology enhances human capabilities without diminishing human dignity and its intelligence

FG warns Nigerians against harassing Mining Marshals

ABUJA

The Minister of Solid Minerals, Dr Dele Alake, has warned Nigerians against the confronta-

tation, harassment and blackmail of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Mining Marshals.

Alake, who gave the warning on Wednesday in Abuja, at the

inauguration of eight new gun trucks at the NSCDC Headquarters, said that anyone with intentions to discredit and frustrate the efforts of the mining marshals in sanitising the solid minerals sector of the economy would be seen as a saboteur.

He also said that some mining marshal have been challenged by persons and institutions who in his estimation were direct beneficiaries of illegal mining activities.

"Anyone whether a uniform personnel or not, who seeks to frustrate the noble works of these

mining marshals is an economic saboteur and will be treated as such. That I can promise you.

"Once you aid, sponsor or operate in illegal mining sites, the government will leave no stone unturned in ensuring your arrest," he said.

The minister said that the inauguration of the gun trucks was just the beginning of the greater plans the ministry had for the mining marshals.

He also said that the ministry's budget had made provision for the purchase of modern tech-

nological gadgets including armoured vests and vehicles to further protect the mining marshals.

"We shall continue at the administrative level to ensure we put all necessary things and support in place to smoothen your operations," he assured

Alake commended the operations of the mining marshals, adding that, their success stories had successfully sent a strong message to illegal mining operators.

"It is no longer business as usual to flout the lines of regulations in Nigeria as there will

be consequences," he warned.

He disclosed that the marshals, in the last two years, had successfully arrested more than 300 illegal miners, prosecuted more than 100 and made several convictions of illegal miners from across the country.

"If we are able to drastically reduce their activities, more revenue will flow into the country as we have been able to attract more investors both locally and internationally following the active clampdown of these illegal operators," he also said.

Oba of Benin appoints Brig-Gen Obasogie as Odionwere of Irokhin Community

BENIN CITY

The Benin monarch, His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, has appointed Pa. Ehigie Paul Oviasuyi, a retired Brigadier in the Nigerian Army as the Odionwere of Irokhin Community in Ughwomode Local Government Area of Edo State, marking the beginning of a new era.

Chief Uyi Okungbowa, the Aideyan-Oba of Benin, alongside Chief Isaac Oghafua Oyeoba, announced the decision of Oba Ewuare II during a recent meeting with elders of Irokhin Community in Oba Palace, Benin City, where a certain misconception was addressed.

In line with the decision of the Oba, jubilant elders and natives of Irokhin Community, converged on their Ogu'edion (elders Chamber) for the installation of the Odionwere, having fulfilled the necessary traditional rites alongside the Okaighele of Irokhin Community, Evans Oloye Isibor.

Pa. Oviasuyi who was assisted by the Ozukpogiev - the second most-ranking elder of the Community, Pa. Ugiagbe Omafo, at the Ogu'edion where prayers and sacrifices were offered to his ancestors with the Ukhure ancestral staff of Irokhin - symbolising the beginning of his administration.

Speaking after his installation, the Community head of Irokhin, Pa. Oviasuyi, presented Evans Oloye Isibor as the Community Okaighele to the elders, and thanked the Oba of Benin for the honour.

Oviasuyi, promised to discharge his duty diligently, while leveraging on his experience in the military for peace and development of the area.

On their part, the second most-ranking elder in the Community, Pa. Ugiagbe Omafo and the Okaighele, madam Janet Ekhatior and Raymond Enogie, expressed delight for the successful installation and promised to work with the Odionwere.

Senate approves higher sugar...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ers, and expanded public education campaigns on healthy nutrition and lifestyle choices.

Public health advocates have long argued that higher taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages can help reduce consumption, improve health outcomes and

generate revenue for health-care services, a strategy already adopted in several countries around the world.

The Senate's decision marks a significant step in Nigeria's efforts to address the growing burden of non-communicable diseases and improve public health financing.

Edo Govt unveils simplified disability...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ty law, stated that education is a fundamental right for persons with disabilities from primary school to university level.

He further explained that the simplified law provides for the establishment of at least one special school in each of the 18 local government areas of the state.

"The law also stipulates that there should be at least one special school in every local government area. It is an offence for parents or guardians to deny children with disabilities access

to education by keeping them out of school," he said.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Edo State Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Mr Theophilus Egbodion, said the simplified version of the law would help educate persons with disabilities and enable them to better understand their rights.

One of the participants, Mr Ovenseri Iduzee, thanked the state government for enacting the law, saying it would help persons with disabilities realise that they enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other citizens.

Police debunk alleged release of...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ecution of all those responsible for the heinous act."

The police further cautioned individuals and groups against spreading unverified reports capable of causing panic and undermining ongoing security operations, while urging residents to rely only on information released through official channels of the Nigeria Police Force and authorized government agencies.

According to the police, citizens should remain calm, vigilant and supportive of ongoing efforts while refraining from sharing unverified information on social media.

Recall that no fewer than 40 schools and their teachers were abducted during attacks on Baptist Nursery and Primary School, Yawote; community High School, Aboro-Esiele and L.A. Primary School in Oriire Local Government Area on May 15, 2026.



FLYOVER:
Ramat Park flyover

Ramat Park flyover: Evoking a city of beauty, splendour and modernity

MATTHEW OKAGHA

BENIN CITY

The Ramat Park flyover in Benin City is steadily emerging as a defining symbol of urban renewal, visionary leadership, and purposeful governance in Edo State. Beyond its imposing physical structure, the project represents a bold political statement that development remains the most enduring legacy of leadership.

History has shown that great societies are built on the foundation of great ideas. When such ideas are driven by courage, conviction, and an unwa-

vering commitment to public good, they transcend mere promises and become tangible monuments of progress. The Ramat Park Overhead Bridge is one such monument.

What started as a vision articulated by Governor Monday Okpebholo during the electioneering period has gradually transformed into a reality that is redefining the landscape of Benin City. The project stands today as evidence that governance is most meaningful when promises are matched with action and when leadership is measured by concrete achievements rather than political rhetoric.

At a time when many citizens across the country have become sceptical of political promises, the Ramat Park Overhead Bridge sends a powerful message that the government can still deliver transformative projects capable of improving the quality of life of the people. It reinforces the growing perception that the present administration is determined to pursue development with urgency and purpose.

Strategically located within one of the busiest corridors of Benin City, the bridge is expected to significantly ease traffic congestion, reduce travel time, improve road safety, and facilitate the movement of people and goods. The economic implications are enormous. Busi-

nesses operating within and around the Ikpoba Hill axis stand to benefit from improved accessibility, while investors are likely to view the area as a more attractive destination for commercial activities.

Politically, the project strengthens the narrative that the Governor Okpebholo administration is committed to infrastructural development as a catalyst for economic growth. It demonstrates a leadership style anchored on practical solutions rather than endless political debates. In an era where citizens increasingly demand visible dividends of democracy, projects such as the Ramat Park Overhead Bridge become powerful indicators of governmental effectiveness.

Tinubu appoints Zainab Marwa as NDDC Board member

ABUJA

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has formally requested the Senate to confirm the appointment of Dr. Zainab Marwa as a member of the Governing Board of the Niger Delta Development Commission, representing Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone.

The request was conveyed in a letter addressed to Senate President Godswill Akpabio and read during plenary on Thursday.

In the correspondence,

President Tinubu explained that the nomination was made in accordance with Section 2(2) of the NDDC Establishment Act, which provides for representation of geopolitical zones on the commission's governing board.

The President noted that Marwa's nomination is intended to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Abdulrazak Ndamas, who previously represented the North-East on the board.

According to Tinubu, Ndamas stepped down from the position on March 30, 2026, to

pursue his governorship ambition in Adamawa State ahead of the state's forthcoming election.

"It is my hope that the Senate will consider and confirm the appointment of Dr. Zainab Marwa as a member of the Governing Board of the Niger Delta Development Commission to represent the North-East zone," the President stated in the letter.

Following the reading of the request, Senate President Akpabio referred the nomination to the Senate Committee on

NDDC for screening and further legislative consideration.

The committee has been mandated to conduct the necessary review and report its findings to the Senate within one to two weeks for final consideration and possible confirmation.

The NDDC is the federal agency charged with facilitating the sustainable development of the Niger Delta region through infrastructure projects, economic empowerment initiatives, and social intervention programmes.

CP orders increased security in schools, correctional centres, others in Delta

ASABA

The Delta Commissioner of Police, Yemi Oyeniyi has ordered Area Commanders and Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) to ensure maximum security in schools,

churches, mosques, and correctional centres in their respective areas of responsibility.

The commissioner gave the order during a meeting attended by members of the command management team, Area Commanders, Tactical Com-

manders, DPOs, and Heads of Departments.

This was contained in a statement signed by the police spokesperson, SP Bright Edefe on Thursday in Asaba.

Oyeniyi directed the senior police officers to ensure adequate security in their areas of responsibility.

"Area commanders and DPOs must locate schools,

churches, mosques, and correctional centres in their areas and ensure that maximum security is provided, and maintain regular visits."

He further directed all supervising officers to ensure strict compliance with the existing rules and regulations of the Nigeria Police Force.

He warned that they would be held liable for the profes-

sional misconduct of officers under their supervision.

The commissioner enjoined all DPOs to engage critical stakeholders within their area of responsibility and sensitise them on the need to be security conscious of their environment.

Oyeniyi decried the rising incidents of murder in the state, adding that "DPOs must engage members of the community they police on the

need to avoid escalating issues that could lead to violence and sometimes death."

He encouraged all officers of the command to always appear smart, neat, and have their name tags on display.

"Any officer without a name tag on their uniform or approved tactical vest will be sanctioned and their supervising officer will be held vicariously liable," he warned.



ITSEKIRI ETHNIC GROUP:

Leaders of Itsekiri ethnic group in Delta during the press conference on Wednesday.

Itsekiri leaders fault INEC ward delineation exercise, seek FG's intervention

WARRI (DELTA)

The Leaders of Itsekiri ethnic group in Delta, has urged the Federal Government to immediately investigate the technical execution and conduct of the electoral wards delineation in the Warri Federal Constituency by INEC.

The Itsekiri leaders made the call at a news conference held at Ubeji Community in Warri South Local Government Area of the state on Thursday.

A statement jointly signed by Chief Edward Ekpoko, Prince Yemi Emiko, Mr Alex Eyengho, Chief Robinson Ariyo, Sir A.S. Mene and others, was read to the media.

The leaders urged INEC not to rely on the disputed fieldwork and flawed Geographic Infor-

mation System (GIS) mapping data for the delineation, pending an independent and transparent technical verification.

They urged all stakeholders to eschew inflammatory rhetoric and pursue peaceful and lawful democratic engagement.

The Itsekiri leaders also urged the security and oversight institutions to closely monitor the process to ensure transparency, accountability and total compliance with constitutional orders.

They vehemently rejected INEC's final report on the wards delineation exercise and charged the commission to increase the Itsekiri wards in Warri North from six to 12 and the Ijaw wards from four to eight.

They also called for the same increment in the Warri South-West Local Government Area.

The Itsekiri leaders said: "Though, we fully support the Supreme Court judgment which directed INEC to conduct a fresh delineation exercise in Warri South, Warri South-West and Warri North Local Government Areas, we cannot accept a defective implementation process.

"We firmly reject the proposed delineation scheme released by the INEC on May 20.

"The exercise violates explicit constitutional provisions, disregards the Electoral Act 2026 (as amended), breaches INEC's operational Guidelines and relies on disputed fieldwork.

"From the onset, we stated that the Itsekiri people are not opposed to lawful electoral reforms, democratic inclusion or constitutional compliance."

They said that the Apex

Court's judgement did not declare the existing 2023 voter register valid, insisting that declaring verifiable data from that 2023 general elections in favour of manufactured mapping undermined public confidence.

According to them, delineation must be based on verifiable registered voter strength, not arbitrary spatial allocation of INEC created polling units and wards without valid registered voters, thereby ignoring its guidelines.

"INEC lumped massive clusters of Itsekiri voters into fewer wards, while artificially inflating smaller voting populations elsewhere to yield more wards."

The leaders, while commending INEC for the proposed creation of additional State Constituency and one Federal Constituency from the Warri Federal Constituency, said that the implementation must be flawless and lawful.

Entrepreneur urges youths to embrace business opportunities, self-reliance

ABUJA

An entrepreneur, Mrs Anike Adeniran, has urged Nigerian youths to embrace entrepreneurship and not despise humble beginnings when starting a business.

Adeniran made the call in an interview with our correspondent on Thursday in Abuja, while sharing her experience in business.

She urged young people, particularly graduates, to remain resilient in spite of the economic situation and as well look beyond their present situations and embrace lawful entrepreneurial opportunities.

Giving an account of how she started the business, she said she began her provisions trade with a capital of N20,000 and displayed her goods on a table in front of her residence, as she could not afford to rent a shop.

According to her, after spending more than 10 years working as a teacher in private schools, I decided to venture into business due to the low income from my teaching job.

"I am a graduate, a wife and a

mother. My teaching job was not enough because I needed to support my husband, so I resigned and ventured into business.

"I started the business a year ago with just N20,000 and no shop. I bought goods, displayed them on a table and converted part of the entrance to my house into a shop.

"Today, I have goods worth more than N300,000 and record daily sales of at least N30,000," she said.

Adeniran encouraged youths not to be discouraged by challenges but to explore legitimate business opportunities capable of helping them make ends meet.

She also said that perseverance, determination and prudent management of resources were critical to business success.

"God encourages us not to despise little beginnings. I started with a small capital and, by God's grace, my story has changed.

"Do not allow anyone to discourage you. You can achieve your goals if you remain focused and do not give up," she said.

Persistent attacks on electric facilities worry Delta commissioner

ASABA

The Delta Government has decried the persistent attacks on electrification facilities across the state, describing the trend as a huge challenge.

The state Commissioner for Power and Energy, Mr Michael Anoka disclosed this on Thursday during a courtesy visit by leaders of Utagba-Ogbe Community in Ndokwa West Local Government Area to his office in Asaba.

The commissioner reiterated the need for communities benefiting from electrification projects to protect the infrastructure from vandalism and sabotage.

Anoka identified cables, transformers, solar batteries and other equipment as common targets of vandals.

The commissioner said that the government had invested heavily in providing and maintaining electricity infrastructure for residents.

He noted that electrification

projects required extensive planning and engineering assessments before implementation.

According to him, vandalism has imposed huge financial burdens on the government and delayed electricity projects.

Anoka warned those involved in sabotaging public facilities to desist or face legal consequences.

He called on community leaders and residents to work with government and security agencies to safeguard public assets.

The commissioner reaffirmed Gov. Sheriff Oborevwori's commitment to expanding infrastructure and improving electricity supply across the state.

He stressed that protecting electricity facilities remained a shared responsibility that required active community participation.

Responding, leader of the delegation, Mr Godwin Edeme, assured the government that the community would protect electricity infrastructure within its area.

Children's Day mishap: Edo delegation visits families, provides support

BENIN CITY

The Edo Government delegation on Thursday visited and provided material support to Benin Technical College students injured during the 2026 Children's Day celebration at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

The delegation, led by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Mr Enodolomwanyi Otamere, visited the homes of the affected students.

Otamere conveyed the government's goodwill and presented a token of support to

the families.

He noted that the purpose of the visit was to assess the well-being of the students, sympathise with their families, and reaffirm government's support.

He disclosed that a panel of inquiry had been constituted to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident and recommend preventive measures to avert future occurrences.

The students visited were Elizabeth Sunday, Mary Bai, and Rejoice Igene, all from the Business Department of Benin Technical College.

The students, who sustained

varying degrees of injuries during the incident, had since received medical treatment and had been discharged from the hospital.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Edo State Board for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EdoBTVE) Mrs. Onomen Briggs, assured the families that students' safety remained a priority.

Briggs said that measures would be strengthened to protect students within schools and during government-organised activities.

Speaking on behalf of the

families, Mrs Sunday Victoria, Mr Friday Igiebor, and Mrs Patience Joy commended Gov. Monday Okpebholo for his prompt intervention.

They also thanked the delegation for the home visits.

It would be recalled that a pandemonium that ensued during the children's day celebration at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium on May 27, led to some students sustaining injuries.

Recall that the state took charge of payment of the medical bills and also provided support throughout their treatment and recovery periods.

NEWS

Unsafe food kills 1.5m people worldwide annually —WHO

Unsafe food causes an estimated 866 million illnesses and 1.5 million deaths every year worldwide, according to new data from the World Health Organisation (WHO). This highlights the often-overlooked toll of contaminated food on health, development, and fragile economies. The new insights, released on Wednesday, ahead of next week's World Food Safety Day (WFSD), celebrated on June 7, show that children under five are particularly vulnerable. Unsafe food is any food that may cause illness, injury, or physical harm when consumed. It is typically contaminated by biological (bacteria, parasites), chemical (toxins, heavy metals), or physical (glass, metal) agents. These hazards can cause conditions ranging from mild diarrhea to severe, life-threatening illnesses. Although they account for just nine per cent of the global population, they are nearly one-third of all foodborne diseases, many of them severe diarrhoeal illnesses that can prove fatal, according to the WHO. Exposure to chemicals such as lead and methylmercury through food can also damage

developing brains and cause lifelong neurological and developmental problems in children. "Food safety is not an abstract issue – it touches every meal, every family, every day. "Unsafe food has always been a major public health concern, but until now, we lacked the bigger picture of its staggering human and economic toll. "These new estimates change that," WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus said. The study found that foodborne bacteria, viruses, and parasites accounted for most illnesses – about 860 million cases in 2021 alone. Yet chemical contamination was responsible for most deaths linked to unsafe food. According to the WHO, chemical hazards accounted for 73 per cent of deaths from contaminated food in 2021. Inorganic arsenic and lead were the leading contributors, largely because prolonged exposure increases the risk of heart disease and cancer. Together, the two substances were linked to more than one million deaths in a single year. Food can become contaminated through unsafe water, im-

properly handled products, or toxins entering the food chain through environmental pollution and industrial activities. Once chemicals such as arsenic, lead, or methylmercury enter the food supply, they are often difficult or impossible to remove. WHO said Africa and Southeast Asia account for nearly three-quarters of all foodborne illnesses and 60 per cent of global deaths. Children and people living in low-resource communities face the greatest risks, reflecting persistent inequalities in food systems, healthcare access, and sanitation.

GYB Model Science School wins FIDA spelling bee competition in Kogi

LOKOJA GYB Model Science School has emerged overall winners of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kogi Chapter organized PROOF Spelling Bee Competition among six schools as part of activities marking the 2026 Children's Day celebration. The competition, held in Lokoja, brought together students from participating schools to showcase their spelling, vocabulary and language skills. Speaking at the event, Justice Ojoma Haruna said the competition aligned with this year's Children's Day theme, "One Child, One Word, One Hope." Haruna, represented by Magistrate Dorcas Abraham, said every child possesses immense potential and deserves access to quality education. "Every child carries a future of possibilities, and it is our collective duty to ensure that no child is forgotten, neglected or denied the right to learn," she said. The judge said spelling bee competitions contribute significantly to children's educational development by improving vocabulary, pronunciation, listening skills, confidence in public speaking and overall mastery of the English language. Also speaking, Justice Maryanne Otaru, a member of FIDA, underscored the educational value of such competitions, noting that they help students gain a deeper understanding of pronunciation and proper language usage beyond merely learning words. In her remarks, the Chairperson of FIDA in Kogi, Mrs Oluwakemi Omeiza-Usman, said the association chose to celebrate this year's Children's Day by highlighting the importance of words and language. According to her, the competition was organised to promote literacy and encourage language mastery among young learners. "We organised this competition because we believe that mastery of language is key to unlocking a world of opportunities. "In an era dominated by shorthand and autocorrect, we are bringing back the lost art of deep reading, focus and orthographic precision," she said. Omeiza-Usman disclosed that the competition was solely sponsored by Prince Olatunji Olusoji, Chairman of the Prince Olatunji Olusoji Foundation (PROOF).

Energy coy promises fresh investments as NUPRC commences 2026 Q3 licensing

ABUJA The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), says the 2026 Licensing Round will commence by Third Quarter (Q3) 2026, having received the Minister of Petroleum Resources approval, in line with the Petroleum Industry Act. The Commission's Chief Executive, Mrs Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan, said this when Meren Energy (formerly Africa Oil), visited the corporate headquarters of the NUPRC in Abuja. Eyesan, in a statement expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the 2025 licensing round so far, adding that the commercial bid would take place in July after which the next licensing round would commence. The NUPRC boss said the heightened participation in the 2025 licensing round was a testament to the fact that Nigeria was headed in the right direction. She said the rise in investments coupled with the upswing in production was evidence that Nigeria's oil and gas sector under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu had become attractive. "We are also fortunate that the President and Minister of Petroleum Resources have approved the 2026 licensing round.

"So, we are in the process of finalising the 2026 launch which will happen latest by the third quarter. So, this is the make or break point and we want to make sure we make it," she said. In his remarks, the Group CEO, Meren Energy, Dr Oliver Quinn, said that the current reforms had inspired the company to increase its investments in Nigeria hence its interest in asset divestments and licensing rounds. Quinn revealed that Meren Energy's investment priority is Africa of which Nigeria's ranks is number one. "We have operated in Agbami, Akpo and Egina world class fields. I think till date, in 20 years about 11 billion dollars in capital from our side has gone into these assets and about four billion dollars has gone to tax and royalties. "Nigeria remains the core of our business today because of the quality of these assets. "Meren Energy is pressuring its partners on these assets to deepen their investments and then increase overall production," he said. He said Meren Energy was the first company in Nigeria to sell crude oil to the Dangote refinery and the firm would continue to fulfill its Domestic Crude Supply Obligation so long as the price remains right.

Youth network calls for positive change among young Nigerians

ABUJA The Youth African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Network, Abuja, has urged young Nigerians to take active roles in promoting positive changes and developments within their communities. The Deputy Coordinator of YALI Network Abuja, Ms Teresa Faruna, made the call in an interview with newsmen on Thursday in Abuja. Faruna said young people had a critical role to play in addressing societal challenges and advancing community development through purposeful actions and civic engagement. According to her, meaningful change does not always require large-scale interventions, as small individual efforts can collectively make a significant impact on society. "I want to tell young Nigerians that we should start by doing little things. Whatever impact or change we want can begin with just one move." The YALI official urged youths to remain actively involved in issues affecting their communities and contribute

their quota towards building a better society. Faruna stressed the need for young people to move beyond discussions and become more intentional about taking practical steps to address challenges around them. She also commended organisations and individuals working to promote social development and create opportunities for vulnerable groups across the country. She expressed optimism that increased youth participation in community initiatives would contribute to national development and strengthen social cohesion.

Court adjourns ruling on Stay of Proceedings in inheritance dispute

KADUNA A Shari'a Court of Appeal in Kaduna has adjourned until June 17, ruling on an application seeking a stay of proceedings pending the determination of an appeal in a protracted inheritance dispute involving the family of the late Ibrahim Muhammad Tunba. The late Tunba died on Oct. 22, 2021, leaving behind two wives and seven children. The dispute centres on the distribution of properties located in Kaduna, Plateau, Taraba and Lagos States, as well as assets in the United Kingdom. The appellants, Edwina Ibrahim, Jamal Ibrahim, Ibrahim Ibrahim, Faisal Ibrahim and Aisha Ibrahim, the first wife of the deceased, are challenging a ruling delivered by the Upper Shari'a Court, Daura Road, on April 28, 2024. They are seeking an order setting aside the ruling and directing the lower court to hear their application to vacate a default judgment delivered on March 26, 2024. At the resumed hearing, counsel to the respondents, comprising Rabia Renee Ibrahim, Omar Abdul-Aziz Ibrahim, Faruq Ibrahim and Abdul Malik Ibrahim, Barr. A. Bashir, presented two witnesses in support of the application. The witnesses, Engr. Umar Yusuf, a building engineer, and Mr Isah Kamba, a businessman, testified before the court. Bashir thereafter urged the court to grant the application for stay of proceedings pending the determination of the appeal. Counsel to the appellants, Barr. Auwal Imam, informed the court that his clients had filed a 15-paragraph counter-affidavit and a written address opposing the motion dated Jan. 12, 2026. He urged the court to adopt the processes and dismiss the application pending the outcome of the suit before the Appeal Court in Kaduna.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly known as **FAITH OGHENECHUKO PAUL**, now wish to be known as **FAITH OGHENECHUKO ODJUBI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME
The general public is hereby notified that **ITEDJERE-ONORIODE MARGARET OMOSIVIE** and **ITEDJERE ONORIODE MARGARET** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known as **ITEDJERE-ONORIODE MARGARET OMOSIVIE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly known as **MISS IROWA OSAYUWAMEN**, now wish to be known as **MRS. IMHONDE OSAYUWAMEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH
I, formerly known as **USMAN HAUWA**, now wish to be known as **IBRAHIM HAUWA**. Also, my correct date of birth is **2/9/1989** and not **19/8/1986** as wrongly written on my BVN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME
The general public is hereby notified that **USIWOMA EVAWOMA-ENUKU** and **ENUKU USIWOMA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known as **USIWOMA EVAWOMA-ENUKU**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME
I, formerly known as **ODUWA STANLEY**, now wish to be known as **IMAFIDON ODUWA STANLEY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME
The general public is hereby notified that my name was wrongly written as **EMWONSA ABRAHAM AISERHIENREN** instead of **AISEHIENREN EMWONSA ABRAHAM**. I wish to be known as **AISEHIENREN EMWONSA ABRAHAM**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

PUBLIC NOTICE/NOTIFICATION OF DEATH
I, **EMIOWELE OMOUKPON JOY**, wishes to inform the general public that **LATE EMIOWELE ELOEDEAKHE PETER (DECEASED)**, was my father. He died on the 30th of June 2014 after a brief illness at **Street 16, Flat 4, Federal Housing Estate, Benin City**.

Until his death he worked in Federal Ministry of Works and Housing and also at the Federal Pay Office, Abuja and retired. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.
Signed: EMIOWELE OMOUKPON JOY - Daughter

CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH
The general public is hereby notified that, I, **IZOBOFO IYABO ANITA** correct date of birth is **19/02/1990**, not **19/02/1995** as wrongly inserted in my BVN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

300,000 expected to participate in Nasarawa North Senatorial bye-election —INEC

AKWANGA (NASARAWA)

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says more than 300,000 registered voters are expected to participate in the Nasarawa North Senatorial District bye-election scheduled for June 20.

Mallam Mohammed Abubakar-Sadiq, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Nasarawa State, dis-

closed this during a stakeholders' sensitisation meeting on Thursday in Akwanga.

Abubakar-Sadiq said the bye-election would be conducted in 583 polling units spread across Nassarawa Eggon, Akwanga and Wamba Local Government Areas of the state.

He said the election became necessary following the demise of Mr Godiya Akwashiki, the senator representing the district, creating a vacancy that

must be filled in line with constitutional provisions.

"The commission has scheduled June 20 for the conduct of the Nasarawa North Senatorial District bye-election.

"The exercise will take place in 583 polling units across the three local government areas of Nasarawa Eggon, Akwanga and Wamba.

"We have over 300,000 registered voters in the district and all polling units will be opened

for the election," he said.

The REC said that voting would commence at 8:30 a.m. and close at 2:30 p.m., adding that voters already on queue before the closing time would be allowed to cast their ballots.

He urged traditional rulers, religious leaders and other stakeholders to mobilise eligible voters and sensitise residents on the importance of participating in the exercise.

Abubakar-Sadiq stressed

that only registered voters in possession of valid Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) would be accredited and allowed to vote.

He explained that the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) would be used to verify voters through fingerprints and facial recognition before voting.

"There is no voting by proxy. Anyone without a PVC has no business at the polling unit.

"The BVAS will authenticate every voter to ensure that only legitimate cardholders participate in the election," he said.

The REC warned that impersonation and other electoral offences would not be tolerated, adding that offenders risk arrest and prosecution.

He said INEC had concluded arrangements for the exercise and was working closely with security agencies and other stakeholders to ensure a peaceful and credible election.

According to him, members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) will serve as ad hoc election officials because of their non-partisan status.



MEREN ENERGY TEAM VISITS NUPRC HQ:

L-R: CEO, Meren Energy, Nigeria, Emeka Phil-Ebosie; Group CEO, Meren Energy, Dr. Oliver Quinn; Commission Chief Executive, NUPRC, Mrs. Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan, and Chief Financial Officer, Meren Energy, Aldo Perracini, when the energy company's management visited the headquarters of NUPRC in Abuja.

Kogi CJ frees 2 inmates in Kabba medium correctional centre

LOKOJA

The Chief Judge of Kogi, Josiah Majebi, on Thursday freed Two awaiting-trial inmates, Hassan Alfa and Umar Abubakar, at the Kabba Medium Security Custodial Centre, after reviewing cases of 22 inmates.

The two inmates were released from custody during the jail delivery exercise after their

cases were reviewed and determined.

The development was part of efforts to decongest custodial facilities and ensure speedy dispensation of justice.

Alfa had been standing trial for alleged criminal conspiracy and theft, while Abubakar was facing charges of criminal conspiracy and assault.

The inmates regained their freedom after Magistrate Su-

san Adaji, delivered judgment on their cases with the consent of the Chief Judge.

Majebi expressed concern over what he described as indolence and lack of commitment by some prosecutors, noting that such attitudes often resulted in unnecessary delays in the administration of justice.

He warned that undue delay in the prosecution of cases would no longer be tolerated, stressing the need for diligence and professionalism among justice sector stakeholders.

The chief judge also frowned at the practice of some courts receiving cash payments instead of bank deposits as part of bail conditions.

He described the development as unacceptable and urged judicial officers to adhere strictly to established procedures.

Majebi further cautioned against the criminalisation of civil matters, saying disputes that were purely civil in nature should not be treated as criminal offences.

Nwoko donates 5 transformers, solar-powered boreholes to Delta North communities

ABUJA

Sen. Ned Nwoko (APC-Delta) has donated transformers to five communities in Delta North Senatorial District in his bid to ensure regular power supply across the district.

Nwoko, in an interview with newsmen in Abuja on Thursday, said that the transformers were expected to improve electricity access, support businesses and enhance the quality of life of residents.

He said that a total of 15 transformers would be delivered and installed in phases across communities in the district, adding that the five already delivered were the first batch.

According to him, the delivered transformers include one 11/500 KVA and four 33/500 KVA, adding that they will be installed at Airport community and Akwuose communities in Asaba, Oshimili South Local Government Area.

Others, he said, would be in-

stalled at Nsukwa community in Aniocha South Local Government Area as well as Okpanam and Illah communities, both in Aniocha North Local Government Area.

The lawmaker, who is the Senate Committee Chairman on Reparation and Repatriations, also said that he had facilitated the construction of three strategic roads with drainage systems at Obiaruku in Ukwuani Local Government Area to ensure that more communities felt the impact of democracy and good representation.

"These roads include Uzorji Street, Osamezu Street and Osondu Street. Contractors have already been mobilised and work is currently ongoing there.

"I have also just constructed a solar-powered borehole for my Nkwu-nzu people and another industrial borehole for my Kwale people in Ndokwa West Local Government Area. The boreholes, as we speak, have started reticulating."

Senate raises sugar tax, establishes health fund for diseases

ABUJA

The Senate has approved a new excise duty regime on sugar-sweetened beverages.

The upper chamber also endorsed the creation of a dedicated funding stream to strengthen public health interventions across the country.

This move is aimed at curbing rising cases of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Nigeria.

The decision followed the consideration and adoption of the report on the Customs, Excise Tariff, etc. (Amendment) Bill by the Joint Committee on Finance and Customs, Excise and Tariff during plenary.

The report was presented by the Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance, Sen. Sani Musa.

He said that under the new framework, the existing N10 per litre excise duty on sugar-sweetened beverages would be replaced with a percentage-based levy tied to retail prices, to be determined by

the Minister of Finance in line with global best practices.

Musa noted that the current flat-rate tax has been significantly eroded by inflation and is no longer sufficient to discourage excessive consumption or generate meaningful fiscal impact.

Musa expressed concern over the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension and cardiovascular conditions, which are increasingly linked to high sugar consumption and unhealthy dietary habits.

He further observed that Nigeria's healthcare system remains underfunded and heavily dependent on out-of-pocket spending, leaving many citizens exposed to financial hardship and limited access to care.

The Senate thereafter directed that the Minister of Finance determines an appropriate levy structure consistent with global standards and ensures that implementation aligns with Nigeria's broader health and fiscal goals.

NHRC ES demands urgent rescue of abducted Oyo school children, others

ABUJA

Dr Tony Ojukwu, SAN, the Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC) has called for the urgent rescue of the abducted Oyo school children and their teachers.

Ojukwu made the call on Thursday in a speech to commemorate the 2026 International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression.

He urged the Federal Government to rescue all kidnapped school children in Oyo State and others including other innocent children in captivi-

ty and ensure justice.

He condemned the recent abduction of school children and teachers in Oyo and Borno, and other similar incidents.

According to him, these abductions are grave violations of children's rights and a direct attack on their right to education, safety, and dignity.

Ojukwu noted that abductions, sexual violence, trafficking, child labour, recruitment by armed groups, and corporal punishment violate Nigeria's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

He added and the African

Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the Child Rights Act, 2003.

"Every child has the right to life, dignity, protection, and education.

"Attacks on schools and children constitute breach of this right and NHRC demand zero tolerance to attacks and violence against school children.

"NHRC calls for full implementation of the Federal Government's Safe Schools Initiative through funded security infrastructure, trained personnel, safe transit routes, and community protection

systems" he said.

He further called on the Senate to pass the bill on safe schools proposed by NHRC, Ward C, Education is a vaccine, Federal ministry of education and other relevant stakeholders.

Ojukwu further urged the enforcement of the Child Rights Act 2003 in all states and effective use of the Universal Basic Education Act, 2004, to reduce children's vulnerability to exploitation.

The NHRC according to him, will monitor, investigate, and pursue redress for all violations against children.

NEWS

Alleged unlawful detention: Widow, detained children sue I-G, FCT Police Commissioner

ABUJA

Lovelyn, the widow of slain Lagos-based businessman, Chief Lucky Adimike, has sued the Inspector-General of Police (I-G), Olatunji Disu, and the FCT Commissioner of Police, Ahmed Sanusi, over alleged unlawful detention.

The 53-year-old woman, alongside her detained children, filed the suit at the Federal High Court in Abuja through their lawyer, Chibuzor Obiajunwa.

The applicants, in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1149/2026, sought their immediate release from police custody.

Lovelyn, Anthony Odirachukwumma Adimike, Stephanie Chinyere Adimike and Comfort Ajibade, who are 1st to 4th applicants, sued the police, I-G and the FCT police commissioner as 1st to 4th respondents respectively.

They named the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), Mr Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, as 4th respondent in the suit.

Although Lovelyn, the 1st applicant, is not in detention, her two children, Anthony and Stephanie, including Comfort, a friend to her daughter, had been in police custody after the death of her husband, Chief Adimike, was discovered on May 15.

They were alleged to be in detention at the FCT Intelligence Response Team (IRT) detention facility, formerly

called, Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) Headquarters, Behind Area 3 Police Station, Gudu District, Abuja.

The applicants, in the fundamental rights enforcement suit dated June 2 but filed on June 3, prayed the court to stop forthwith the violation of their rights to life, dignity of their human persons, personal liberty, freedom of movement, among others.

They sought an order directing the I-G and the commissioner to charge all of them or anyone of them before appropriate court if the police investigation established a prima facie case against them or any of the affected applicants.

They also urged the court to thereafter order the police to transmit the original copy of the police investigation case file to the AGF and Minister of Justice, Mr Fagbemi, for a legal opinion and necessary administrative action.

In the affidavit in support of the originating motion on notice deposed to by Lovelyn, she said she had been married to the late Adimike for almost 25 years and that the marriage had produced four children.

Lovelyn said her husband, a businessman, became interested in property business in Abuja in the year 2016.

According to her, his new business interest started bringing him regularly to Abuja from Lagos where they are based as a family.

She said while Anthony, 23, was posted to Abuja for his national youth service after graduation, Stephanie, 20, who is also in university, came to Abuja for her industrial training.

She said this prompted her late husband to rent a house in Guzape, Abuja where they would be living and where he

would also be staying with them whenever he came to Abuja.

"On 11th May, 2025 my husband travelled to Abuja while I remained in Lagos.

"On 13th May, 2025, my husband expressed an interest that he wanted the 2nd and 3rd applicants to cook stew and soup for him.

"On the basis of that, I sent a list of ingredients to my daughter, the 3rd applicant."

The woman averred that on

May 14, Stephanie duly bought all the ingredients as instructed and she and Anthony cooked the soup and stew that evening.

"My late husband, who was present in the kitchen, duly made a video of the cooking by our children and proudly shared it on our nuclear family platform, known as 'Lucky Adimike Family.'"

"That night, after my husband, Chief Godwin Chinedu Lucky Adimike, went to bed, one of my

daughter's friends by name Comfort Ajibade, the 4th applicant came over to the house.

"The 2nd, 3rd and 4th applicants drove out for a night outing that night as they were previously used to doing whenever the 2nd and 3rd applicants were in the house on their own.

"The next day, my children went about their business as usual without knowing that their father had been killed in his bedroom."

**INAUGURATION:**

L-R: Special Assistants to the President on Digital Media, Mr O'tega Ogra; Senior Special Adviser to the President on Media and Public Communication, Mr Sunday Dare; Chief Executive Officer, Rolling Energy Ltd., Alhaji Mubarak Dambata; Minister of State for Petroleum (Gas), Chief Ekperikpe Ekpo; Executive Chairman, Presidential Initiative on CNG and Electric Vehicles, Dr Usani Basaka and the Regional Coordinator of (NMDPRA), Hajiya Maijidda Abulkadir, during the inauguration of High Capacity Daughter Booster Station by the minister, at Jahi District in Abuja recently.

Osun: Police launch probe into attack on Osogbo LG PDP Chairman

OSOGBO

The Police Command in Osun on Thursday said it had commenced a comprehensive investigation into a shooting incident targeting the Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Osogbo Local Government Area, Mr Ashimiyu Ajibola.

The Command's spokesperson, DSP Abiodun Ojelabi, said in a statement issued in Osogbo that gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire on Ajibola's vehicle in a suspected assassination attempt.

Ojelabi said the incident occurred on Wednesday at about 11:50 p.m. along the MDS area of Osogbo, noting that two armed men riding on a motorcycle reportedly attacked the victim.

He said that immediately the command received the report, officers were mobilised to the scene.

According to him, the victim was taken to a medical facility where he is currently receiving treatment.

Ojelabi added that medical personnel had confirmed that the victim was in stable condi-

tion and responding positively to treatment.

He said the police had launched an aggressive manhunt for the fleeing suspects to ensure their arrest and prosecution.

Ojelabi further stated that preliminary investigations at the scene led to the recovery of exhibits, which are being subjected to forensic analysis.

He said the Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr Ibrahim Gotan, had condemned the incident, ordered a high-powered investigation, and directed the deployment of resources to apprehend those responsible.

Similarly, the Commissioner for Information and Public Enlightenment, Mr Kolapo Alimi, also condemned the attack.

Alimi, in a statement, said the incident involving the victim, now the Accord Chairman in Osogbo Local Government Area, must be thoroughly investigated.

He urged the police to leave no stone unturned in unmasking the perpetrators of the attack.

Ajibola was formerly a member of the PDP in Osogbo Local Government Area before defecting to the Accord Party, where he was appointed chairman.

Police arrest son for allegedly beating father to death in Akure

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State has arrested a 38-year-old man, Nsikak Kingsley, for allegedly killing his biological father, Adone Peter.

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

Jimoh disclosed that the tragic incident occurred in Oda Community, Akure South Local Government Area of the state.

He explained that the preliminary investigation revealed that on May 28, the suspect allegedly engaged his 65-year-old father in a violent altercation which escalated into a physical assault.

"During the confrontation, the deceased reportedly sustained severe injuries, particularly on the head. He was immediately rushed to a medical facility for urgent medical attention.

"Sadly, despite efforts by medical personnel, the attend-

ing doctor confirmed him dead while receiving treatment.

"Following a formal complaint lodged at the police station by Daniel Moses, a son of the deceased and brother to the suspect, detectives promptly commenced investigation into the matter.

"Acting swiftly on the report, police operatives apprehended the suspect and took him into custody for questioning," he said.

Jimoh said that the remains of the deceased had been deposited at the mortuary for preservation and autopsy, while the case has been transferred to the State Criminal

Investigation Department (SCID) for investigation.

According to him, the suspect will be charged to court upon the conclusion of investigation.

He reiterated the command's unwavering commitment to ensuring that justice was served and that any person found culpable of criminal offences was made to face the full weight of the law.

He urged members of the public to shun violence in all its forms, and embrace peaceful and lawful means of resolving disputes, irrespective of the circumstances.

Police rescue 3 children, arrest 2 suspected child traffickers

UYO

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom, has rescued three abducted children and arrested two suspected child traffickers along Ekparakwa village in Mkpato Enin Local Government Area.

The Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Timfon John, disclosed this in a statement in Uyo on Thursday.

John said that at about 7p.m., on Wednesday, the operative of the command received a distress call through a concerned individual, reporting the ab-

duction of three children along Ekparakwa village in Mkpato Enin Local Government Area.

She said on receipt of the report, detectives were immediately mobilised, and all strategic entry and exit routes within the area were swiftly cordoned off in a coordinated operation aimed at rescuing the victims and apprehending the perpetrators.

She said during the intensive search, operatives intercepted a mini bus with registration number 830 PH.

According to her, a thorough search of the vehicle led to the discovery of the three missing

children inside the bus.

She said the children were rescued unharmed, while two suspects were arrested on the spot.

The police spokesperson said the rescued children had since been reunited with their families, while the suspects remain in police custody.

She added that the state Commissioner of Police (CP), Baba Azare, had commended the swift response of the operatives and the vigilance of community members whose timely information aided the successful rescue operation.

Azare also directed that a

discreet and comprehensive investigation be carried out to identify and arrest other members of the criminal syndicate for prosecution.

He reiterated the command's unwavering commitment to combating child trafficking, abduction, and all forms of crime across the state.

He urged members of the public to remain vigilant and continue providing timely and credible information to security agencies.

The CP assured that every useful information received would be treated with the utmost confidentiality.



LEGAL RUDIMENTS

with *Roland Osakue* Esq.

rollandosakue@gmail.com

0802 336 5483

Repositioning for effective justice delivery and democratic stability in Nigeria

*Being A Keynote Address
Delivered By*

**Hon. Justice Mohammed
Baba Idris, JSC. At
Nigerian Bar Association,
Benin Branch Law Week...**

Continued from Tuesday edition

3. Corruption and Ethical Concerns: Although the overwhelming majority of judicial officers in Nigeria remain persons of honour and integrity, allegations and perceptions of corruption within the justice sector continue to pose serious challenges to public confidence in the administration of justice. The authority of the judiciary ultimately rests not on the coercive powers of the State, but on public trust in its integrity, impartiality, and moral legitimacy. Once confidence in judicial neutrality begins to erode, the legitimacy of the entire justice system and, indeed, the democratic process itself, becomes endangered. It is therefore imperative that the highest standards of judicial ethics, discipline, transparency, and accountability be continually upheld and strengthened within the legal profession and the Bench.

4. Political Interference and Threats to Judicial Independence: The survival of constitutional democracy depends substantially upon the independence of the judiciary. Any attempt, whether direct or indirect, by political actors or institutions to intimidate courts, influence judicial outcomes, undermine judicial officers, or disregard lawful court orders constitutes a grave threat to constitutional governance and the rule of law. The doctrine of separation of powers is not merely theoretical; it is a practical constitutional safeguard intended to preserve institutional balance and prevent arbitrariness in governance. Therefore, all arms and levels of government must respect the constitutional independence of the judiciary and refrain from actions capable of eroding its credibility or autonomy.

5. Technological Deficiency and Slow Digital Transformation: Although the Nigerian judiciary has in recent years embraced certain aspects of digital innovation, however, much remains to be done to bring our justice system in line with global best practices. In many courts across the country, judicial processes remain largely manual and time-consuming. Judges continue to record proceedings in longhand, while several courts still lack comprehensive electronic filing systems, digital case management platforms, reliable virtual hearing facilities, and adequate technological support. In an era driven by rapid technological advancement, the absence of modern digital infrastructure contributes significantly to inefficiency, delay, poor record management, and limited access to justice. Contemporary judicial systems across the world increasingly rely on technology to enhance transparency, efficiency, speed, and accessibility. Nigeria cannot afford to remain behind in this inevitable transition to-



HON. JUSTICE MOHAMMED BABA IDRIS, JSC

ward digital justice administration.

6. Insecurity and Limited Access to Justice: The prevailing security challenges across various parts of the country have also adversely affected access to justice. Courts situated in conflict-prone or violence-affected areas frequently encounter operational difficulties, disruptions, and threats to judicial personnel and litigants alike. In addition, many vulnerable persons, particularly those residing in rural or economically disadvantaged communities, lack the financial means, institutional support, or geographical access necessary to pursue legal remedies. In certain instances, citizens are compelled to travel considerable distances before they can access a court of competent jurisdiction. Justice, however, must not merely exist in theory; it must be practically accessible to every citizen, irrespective of status, economic condition, or geographical location.

7. Failure to Obey Court Orders and Judgments:

Another serious challenge confronting the justice system is the increasing disregard for court orders and judicial decisions by certain individuals, institutions, and governmental authorities. The authority of the courts, and indeed the sanctity of the rule of law, depend substantially upon the faithful obedience to judicial pronouncements. While the judiciary possesses the constitutional authority to interpret the law and pronounce judgments and the enforcement of such judgments frequently depends on enforcement agencies. Consequently, where court orders are treated with contempt or selectively obeyed, the administration of justice is severely undermined, public confidence in democratic institutions is weakened, and the authority of the Constitution itself is diminished. No democracy can flourish where judgments of competent courts are ignored

with impunity. Respect for court orders is not optional in a constitutional democracy; it is a fundamental obligation imposed by the rule of law.

REPOSITIONING THE JUSTICE SECTOR: IMPERATIVE REFORMS FOR SUSTAINABLE JUSTICE DELIVERY

If Nigeria must secure a stable democratic future founded upon the rule of law, constitutional order, and public confidence in governance, then far-reaching and deliberate reforms within the justice sector are imperative. The demands of modern governance, the complexities of emerging legal issues, and the legitimate expectations of citizens require a justice system that is efficient, independent, technologically responsive, ethically grounded, and accessible to all. In this regard, the following reforms are of critical importance:

1. Strengthening Judicial Independence: Judicial independence remains the cornerstone of constitutional democracy and the bedrock upon which the rule of law rests. A judiciary that is subject to undue influence, whether political, financial, or institutional, cannot effectively discharge its constitutional mandate as the impartial arbiter between citizens and the State. Therefore, the constitutional provisions guaranteeing financial autonomy for the judiciary must be fully implemented and respected at all levels of government. Judicial appointments, promotions, and disciplinary procedures must equally remain transparent, merit-driven, and insulated from partisan or political interference. Only a judiciary that is demonstrably independent can inspire public confidence, preserve constitutional balance, and sustain democratic governance.

2. Technological Transformation of the Justice System: The future of justice administration lies substantially in technological innovation and digital transformation. Modern judicial



MR IREDIA I. OSIFO, CHAIRMAN, NBA BENIN BRANCH

systems across the world increasingly rely upon technology to improve efficiency, transparency, accessibility, and case management. The adoption and expansion of electronic filing systems, virtual court proceedings, digital case management platforms, automated scheduling systems, and electronic record preservation, will significantly reduce delays and enhance the overall administration of justice. Technology also possesses the capacity to expand access to justice for citizens residing in remote communities, thereby democratising legal services and judicial access. It is noteworthy that legal research and judicial administration in Nigeria have already benefited immensely from digital innovations introduced by platforms such as Law Pavilion, the electronic version of the Nigerian Weekly Law Reports, and other modern legal research databases and repositories. These innovations have substantially improved access to judicial authorities, legal materials, and research efficiency for judges, lawyers, and scholars alike. Nevertheless, greater institutional investment and nationwide technological integration remain necessary if the Nigerian judiciary is to fully align with global best practices in digital justice administration.

3. Procedural and Legislative Reforms: Although Nigeria's procedural laws have undergone commendable reforms over the years, further modernisation and harmonisation remain necessary to eliminate technicalities and delays that hinder efficient justice delivery. Frivolous interlocutory applications, abuse of court processes, and dilatory tactics should be discouraged through stricter procedural controls and effective case management, while greater emphasis must be placed on substantive justice. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as arbitration, mediation, conciliation, and restorative justice should also be

strengthened to reduce the burden on conventional courts and promote faster dispute resolution. Additionally, the expansion of specialised courts and divisions staffed by judicial officers with expertise in areas such as commercial law, cybercrime, taxation, maritime law, electoral matters, and financial crimes will enhance efficiency, competence, and the expeditious determination of complex disputes.

4. Capacity Building and Continuing Legal Education: The dynamic and evolving nature of law, governance, and technology necessitates continuous judicial education and professional development for judicial officers, legal practitioners, and court administrators. Contemporary legal challenges involving cybercrime, artificial intelligence, digital evidence, data protection, financial technology, electoral jurisprudence, transnational organised crime, and emerging commercial practices require specialised judicial competence and modern legal training. A justice system can only be as effective as the quality, learning, and preparedness of those entrusted with its administration. Consequently, sustained investment in judicial education, institutional training, legal research, and continuing professional development is indispensable to ensuring that the justice sector remains responsive to evolving societal and technological realities.

5. Ethical Reorientation and Institutional Accountability: Integrity must remain the defining pillar of the judiciary and the legal profession. The moral authority of the courts derives substantially from public confidence in the honesty, impartiality, discipline, and ethical conduct of judicial officers and legal practitioners. Judicial officers must continue to uphold the highest standards of integrity, independence, learning, and decorum, while members of the legal profession must remain faithful to the ethical obligations imposed by law and professional responsibility. Institutions charged with disciplinary oversight within the Bench and the Bar must continue to operate firmly, transparently, and fairly in order to preserve the dignity, credibility, and moral legitimacy of the justice sector.

6. Expanding Access to Justice: Justice must remain people-centred and accessible to all segments of society irrespective of economic status, geographical location, literacy level, or social condition. A democratic society cannot truly prosper where justice is effectively available only to the privileged and economically advantaged. Accordingly, legal aid services and public interest legal support systems should be strengthened to assist indigent and vulnerable citizens. Simplified court procedures, community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, mobile courts where necessary, legal awareness initiatives, and grassroots legal education programs should equally be expanded in order to bring justice closer to the people. The administration of justice must not only exist in principle; it must be accessible, affordable, and meaningful in practice.

TO BE CONTINUED

NEWS EXTRA

Edo Pilgrims visit historic Islamic sites in Makkah ahead of return to Nigeria

BENIN CITY

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

Edo State pilgrims participating in the 2026 Hajj exercise in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Monday embarked on visits to some of Islam's most significant historical sites in Makkah as they await the commencement of their return journey to Nigeria.

The educational and spiritual tour was led by the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Mu-

hammad Uduimoh, alongside the Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar.

Among the sites visited were the Cave of Hira, where Prophet Muhammad (SAW) received the first revelation of the Holy Qur'an; the Cave of Thawr, where the Prophet and his companion sought refuge while migrating from Makkah to Madinah; the site where Prophet Ibrahim (AS) prepared to sacrifice his son, Ismail (AS), in obedience to Allah's command before a ram was provided as a substitute; and Jabal Al-Rah-

mah (Mount of Mercy) in Ara-fat, one of the most important landmarks associated with the Hajj pilgrimage.

Speaking during the tour, Mallam Uduimoh emphasized the importance of exposing pilgrims to the rich history of Islam and the sacrifices made by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and other prophets in establishing and propagating the religion.

He said, "It is important to visit these places so as to appreciate the efforts made by Prophet Muhammad in establishing the religion,"

He added that the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board remains committed to providing pilgrims with a comprehensive Hajj experience beyond the core rites of the pilgrimage.

The chairman stated, "For us, we want to ensure that our pilgrims are exposed to everything they need to do and know because we are determined to make a difference,"

The pilgrims expressed appreciation to the board for organizing the visits, describing the experience as both enlightening and spiritually rewarding.



EDO PILGRIMS VISIT:

The Executive Secretary of Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar (centre) distributes luggage bags to pilgrims in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in preparation for their return to Nigeria.

Obi urges aspirants to accept primary results, rally for common goal

ABUJA

The presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), Mr Peter Obi, has appealed to all aspirants of the party to accept the outcomes of its recently concluded primary elections.

He also called on them to close ranks in the interest of unity, discipline and long-term political success.

Obi spoke at the party's second National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting in Abuja, saying internal competition was normal in a growing political movement.

He, however, warned that lingering grievances could weaken the party's mission if not quickly resolved.

"I want to sincerely appeal to all our aspirants; those who participated in our primaries to accept the outcomes in good faith.

"In every democratic process, there will be winners and there will be others who did

not succeed. What matters most is what we do after the process," Obi said.

He stressed that the party's rapid transition from registration to congresses, conventions and primaries within about 90 days required maturity from members.

"We have done congresses, we have done conventions, and we have done primaries all within about 90 days. Even established parties struggle with this," he said.

"We must therefore show understanding, patience and sacrifice for the greater good of the party."

The former Anambra State governor urged members to shift focus from internal disputes to the broader goal of building a credible alternative political platform capable of addressing Nigeria's challenges.

"We should not be overly consumed by today's internal processes. We must look ahead to tomorrow.

"This party will be different.

When given the opportunity, we will demonstrate leadership that is inclusive, compassionate and accountable," he added.

In his remarks, the National Chairman of the NDC, Sen. Moses Cleopas, described the party's emergence and rapid organisational progress as "extraordinary", attributing its sur-

vival and growth to divine guidance and collective sacrifice.

"We are witnessing something unusual. Within a very short time, this party has moved from registration to conventions and primaries. It is not by human effort alone; there is a Higher hand guiding this process," he said.

Non-custodial sentencing, solution to prison decongestion – NCoS

ABUJA

The Nigerian Correctional Services (NCoS) says the adoption of Non-custodial sentencing, will aid prison decongestion.

NCoS Public Relations Officer in FCT, DSC Duza Adamu, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen in Abuja, on Thursday.

Adamu said that as a service, the command was specifically carrying out massive sensitisation on the adoption of non-custodial sentencing in the FCT.

According to him, when

a judge adopts the non-custodial sentencing, it limits or reduces the number of inmates who will go into the facility, or the custodial centres.

"The non-custodial service is all about alternative to imprisonment. And so, when there are cases that do not require incarceration, we advise that those cases are better handled at the non-custodial service level."

He explained that the alternative also prioritised offender rehabilitation for minors, community service, probation, fines, suspended sentence, parole, plea bargaining, compensation and

Defence minister urges tech sector to develop indigenous security solutions

ABUJA

The Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa, has urged Nigerian innovators, startups, and researchers to direct their expertise toward developing home-grown solutions to the nation's security challenges.

This was contained in a statement on Thursday, by Leah Katung-Babatunde, his Special Assistant on Media.

Katung-Babatunde said that Musa gave the charge while speaking at the Omniverse Africa 3.0 Summit in Lagos.

Musa delivered a keynote address titled "The 70/30 Rule: Why Nigeria's Security and Innovation Agendas are the Same National Project".

He noted that national security in the 21st century could no longer depend solely on conventional military hardware, emphasising the need for Nigeria to transition from a consumer to a producer of defence technology.

"The future requires us to complement courage with technology, foresight, industrial capability, and innovation.

"We must secure the nation today, but we must also build the capabilities that will secure the nation tomorrow," he said.

Musa revealed that the ministry was restructuring its doctrine, acquisition processes, and training with a view to prioritised unmanned systems and robotics, surveillance technologies, cybersecurity and resilience, secure communications, AI governance, data-driven decision tools, and advanced domestic manufacturing.

He linked the push to President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda for industrialization.

He noted that ongoing reforms at the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) were aimed at creating an ecosystem where defence investments drive economic growth, high-tech jobs, university research, and new commercial markets.

DBN disburses ₦1trn to MSMEs, unveils 5-year growth plan

LAGOS

The Development Bank of Nigeria (DBN) Plc says it has disbursed more than N1 trillion to over one million Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), supporting the creation of more than 1.6 million jobs since inception.

Managing Director of DBN, Dr Tony Okpanachi, disclosed this to newsmen in Lagos.

Okpanachi said the next phase of the bank's growth would focus on expanding support for MSMEs through deeper financial inclusion, increased capital mobilisation and targeted interventions for underserved sectors.

He said DBN aims to reach more than two million MSMEs and facilitate the creation of two million direct and indirect jobs over the next five years.

"Our strategic intent over this period is to achieve scale by

expanding support for MSMEs and strengthening inclusive economic growth," he said.

According to him, the bank targets outstanding loans of N1 trillion and plans to issue N500 billion in guarantees under the new strategy.

He added that DBN also seeks to mobilise N1.3 trillion in debt and equity capital to drive its expansion plans.

Okpanachi said the strategy places strong emphasis on inclusion, with 40 per cent of loans earmarked for women-led businesses and 30 per cent for youth-owned enterprises.

He added that 15 percent of disbursements would be directed to MSMEs in underdeveloped geopolitical zones and focus states.

The managing director said the bank also plans to expand green financing to between N75 billion and N100 billion and train 500,000 MSMEs through its capacity-building

restitution for first-time offences.

Adamu added that the agency also embarked on advocacy visits to the chief judge of the FCT occasionally, with a view to encourage periodic visits to correctional centres for jail delivery exercise.

He explained that the jail delivery exercise entailed the judge visiting the custodial centres to review the cases of awaiting-trial inmates, and free those who do not have any business being in prison.

"The chief judge of the FCT has been coming, periodically, to our centres, to see how they can release those who don't have business be-

ing in the custodial centres. This is also part of the efforts to decongest our facilities," he said.

The NCoS FCT public relations officer further said that the agency was also committed to classifying inmates in the custodial centres through systematic assessment into specific custody or supervision levels.

"When inmates are properly classified to the appropriate correctional resources that matches individual risks, behavioral patterns, and personal needs, it promotes institutional safety, tailored rehabilitation plans, and aids decongestion.

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

VISITING HOURS, A 'Gbovo' Eriamiantoe film

DAVIDSON IMOSIME IZEGAEGBE

The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." John Milton

We grew up as humans from childhood on the efficacy of spirituality. This has subconsciously become a compass by which the mundane and the spiritual roadmap distances are measured. Again, how would it feel, if we realized that we can be opportuned to have visiting hours, or just an hour, with our loved deceased relatives or friends?

The concept is as intoxicating as it is terrifying. It is the ultimate "what if," a bridge built of longing and impossible physics. If such an hour existed, would it be a sanctuary of healing, or would it simply be the cruelest form of a second goodbye or grief? The film VISITING HOUR, as directed by a medical doctor cum filmmaker, Dr Osaigbovo Eriamiantoe, is a psychological and psychiatric therapeutic experience through the film lenses on a simple knock on the connecting door between the living and the dead. Who says it is not possible?

Perhaps the shifting lines between the living and the dead is the secret utility of the hour. We all know how it is, the first time someone dies; we are often too traumatized to say a proper goodbye. We are either in unreasonable shock, or we are focused on the failed machinery of the hospital, or we are drowning in the logistics of a funeral and self guilt. The movie, Visiting Hour offers a clean attempt at our saying a proper goodbye. It is a departure handled with full consciousness and intentionality.

We have read books and seen movies in cinemas where people cry over dead relatives, friends wishing they could rise from their coffins during burial ceremonies. If this truly happens, would this encounter not immediately strip away the trivialities of our daily lives? If the clock ticks loudly, would the air of silence not likely be thick enough with the weight of things better not said?

For many, the first few minutes of the journey from the living to a place for such a reunion, as seen in the movie, would be consumed by the sheer sensory shock of such a moment. The specific pitch of laughter, the manner of adjusting eyeglasses, and the minds to preserve and portray the impressionistic blurs, to see details rendered seamlessly in high-definition once more before the viewers, would be an overwhelming cognitive overload. In this movie, 'Visiting Hours', the dead are not just mere ghosts or memories; they are participants in communication. They are there to listen, observe, speak, and perhaps most importantly, witness who we have become in their absence.

This film made us realize that most people carry a case file of ledger of regrets following deaths of loved ones. We found ourselves haunted by the "I love you" that were swallowed by time and pride, the apologies that were delayed by the drumbeat of procrastination until the hospital room was silenced. Visiting Hours would ultimately serve as a celestial courtroom for these unresolved debts within us as human beings. The film which saw a man lucky enough to realize, after his wife's death, that he now had to create time for their only child from the time he never had. Would you use your visiting hour to seek absolution or question the reality of such?

However, there is a secondary, perhaps more beautiful, use for this time: the reporting of sad griefs like, telling fathers about the birth of their child and the death of their wives who left them



without a goodbye or never hearing the voice of dead parents anymore from postponed phone calls. We often think of mourning as a process of looking backward, which most times transcends grief to what a one-hour visit to the dead would do to allow us say our goodbyes properly to enable us turn a static memory into a dynamic relationship, even if only for the duration of a lunch break.

Psychologically, the existence of Visiting Hours as narrated by the storyteller would fundamentally alter the way we live and view life. But again, as humans, If we knew we had a guaranteed hour of contact after death, would we be more devoted or careless with our relationships in the present? Or would the knowledge of that strict, one hour visiting moment make us more intentional?

There is a psychological phenomenon known as complicated grief, or as put by a psychiatrist consultant- pathological grieving- where a person becomes stuck in a cycle of longing which then prevents such persons from moving forward. Would these people not grab the opportunity of a one-hour visit to their lost ones if given the opportunity? However, it could be a dangerous trap to be able to see loved ones again, to feel the warmth of their hands and hear the clarity of their voices, only to have them snatched away

again when the buzzer sounds. Will this not restart the grieving processes from day one again and even worse. Or you do not think so? What if for a visiting hour, one loses a year from one's life; do you not think many grieving persons would rather waste their lives on earth visiting their lost ones till they exhaust their years and join their departed loved ones?

The cruelty of the hour is in its brevity as it's like a flash in the pan as expressed by the actors played by Seun Kentebe and Angela Edosa. As the end of the visiting hour hits, the desperation and scramble for meaning set in, the clock then ticking faster than the heartbeats as the dead leaves, thereby turning a moment's joy to a stark reminder that the dead are truly gone. Take for instance, the digital age which has already given us a pale imitation of this visiting hour. Imagine the voicemails saved in your phone cloud drives, videos on your social media handles, even your external hard drives for storage that allow us to visit the "dead" in a one-sided loop. The missing link here is the interactive element of Visiting Hours which changes the soul of the experience. It moves from observation with these digital storages to conversation.

Philosophically, this movie ultimately raises questions in our worried minds about the nature of the afterlife itself. If these dead can come back

The "Visiting Hour" is an attempt at imagination on how it can strip away the mystery of the Great Unknown and replace it with a scheduled appointment. For some, this would be a comfort; for the spiritually inclined, it might feel like a sacrilegious reduction of a divine mystery into a calendar event, but is it?

for an hour to meet with the living, where are they, when not visiting, the rest of the time? Are they waiting in a lobby? Are they floating with only them watching us? The "Visiting Hour" is an attempt at imagination on how it can strip away the mystery of the Great Unknown and replace it with a scheduled appointment. For some, this would be a comfort; for the spiritually inclined, it might feel like a sacrilegious reduction of a divine mystery into a calendar event, but is it?

One great thing about the movie is the great realization of how ephemeral life is. In the movie, we notice that as the hour wanes, the tone of the conversation inevitably shifts. The apologies have been made, the news has been shared, and the shock has worn off temporarily. Did you envisage how the final ten minutes before the end of the visiting hour would look like? This is the space for the last Instructions like, "How do I keep going?" "What should I do now all alone with our plans and promises?" "Are you okay without me?" Truly, the "Visiting Hour" is, in many ways, a mirror before us. We are not just visiting the dead; we are visiting the part of ourselves that died with them. Do note, as revealed by the movie, when the visiting hour expires, the dead silence returns. This is the reality of a second parting that creates a unique form of agony, unlike the first death, which is often chaotic, unexpected, or shrouded in the fog of illness and others. No matter what, the end of the Visiting Hour, if as imagined, may be a cold, calculated deadline for self actualisation.

If truly visiting hours with lost ones were real, our world would be a more melancholic place, as we would walk around with a rueful smile knowing that the people we see in around us are all carrying a date in their pocket, a future appointment with a ghost. Again visiting hours is cool but we cannot have it as the laws of physics suggest. Perhaps the exercise of imagining as posited by the film is enough. It reminds us that while we cannot yet visit the dead, we are still very much in the visiting hours of the living. Just as the film clearly shows, the clock of our visiting hour is always ticking, even though the veil is still closed. A living dog, truly, is better than a dead lion.

ArtsWorld with Francis Odupute 08023680030

Power of imagination: Creativity in the eyes of Nigerian children

*Being a lecture delivered by Francis Umen-
du Odupute, Arts Editor, The Nigerian
Observer Newspapers, and Chairman,
Francodus Art Foundation (FAF) at the
National Gallery of Art(NGA) Children's
Day Celebration 2026, in Benin City, on
Tuesday, 2nd June, 2026.*

PROTOCOLS:

The Director-General and management of the National Gallery of Art (NGA), the Curator, NGA Benin, Mrs. Joy Ogben, distinguished guests, parents, teachers, caregivers, fellow artists, ladies and gentlemen, and most importantly, our wonderful children of talent;

Good morning, and Happy Children's Day to every child here today.

I am deeply honored to serve as the Chairman of this important event. I commend the National Gallery of Art (NGA), for creating this platform where the voices, dreams, and creativity of Nigerian children can be celebrated.

Today, we gather around a powerful theme: "Power of Imagination: Creativity in the Eyes of Nigerian Children."

I will start by 'warning' parents and caregivers here to please beware - a child's interest is their natural future! I will explain this 'warning' shortly with a personal testimony...

Imagination is one of the greatest gifts God has given humanity. Before every invention, there was an idea. Before every masterpiece, there was a vision. Before every breakthrough, there was a dream.

The airplanes we fly, the phones we use, the bridges we cross, the cars we drive, the medicines that save lives, the chairs we sit on, the shoes we wear, the bags we carry, (just name it!) are all works of art; and these works of art that inspire us and support our existence on earth all began in someone's imagination.

Every child seated here today possesses that same divine gift. If you're observant enough, you will discover it early in their lives through the things that interest them the most.

Children, I want you to understand some-

thing very important: your imagination matters. What you imagine in your mind can change our world tomorrow for the better. When you draw a picture, draw a cartoon, paint a landscape, write a story, compose a song, a poem or spoken word, design a craft, or think of a new solution to a problem around you, you are exercising a power that can change your own future and even transform our society.

Many great Nigerians started as children with dreams and imagination. Some became artists like me, engineers, architects, writers, doctors, scientists, entrepreneurs, journalists, and leaders because they dared to believe in their ideas.

Do not allow anyone to tell you that your talent is too small or your dream is impossible. The future belongs to those who can imagine it before others can see it.

However, imagination alone is not enough. A gift must be developed. Talent must be nurtured. Creativity must be practiced. Are you listening to me?

Children must learn to ask questions, explore new ideas, read widely, observe carefully, and think critically. The world today rewards people who can solve problems, create solutions, and think differently. I encourage every child here today to make creativity a daily habit. Draw more. Read more. Learn more. Practice more. Create more.

Do not be afraid of mistakes. A mistake is only something you make when you're attempting to do something right and something goes amiss! Every great artist has made mistakes. I have made plenty of mistakes. Every successful person has experienced failure; but failure is not final, and that you failed doesn't mean you are a failure. What matters is the courage to keep learning and improving on yourself and on what you do.

To the parents and caregivers present here today, permit me to speak directly to you.

Many talented children never reach their full potential, not because they lack ability, but because they lack support. Some children discover their artistic talents early in life, yet their gifts are ignored, discouraged, or dismissed as distractions. I was almost a victim of this by some close relatives when I was a teenager, but thank God for my secondary school Art teacher then, Mr. Peter Eboigbe of blessed memory, who came to our house to educate my illiterate father, Ogbennia Umen-
du Odupute, and encouraged him to buy me art materials instead of stopping me from drawing. My father commissioned my art teacher, who then went to the market and bought me my first drawing board and several art materials. And that was a turn-

ing point in my life and academics as a youth.

Today, over 55 years later, I have many testimonies to give as an artist. I have been recognized internationally as a multiple international award-winning journalist because of Art. On 4th December, 2009, I won the Global Media Award for Excellence in Population Reporting (Editorial Cartoon category) from the Population Institute, Washington, D.C., USA; I won the WASH Media Awards 2012 (Cartoon/photo category) in Stockholm, Sweden, on 31 August, 2012; (Visit: <http://saharareporters.com/node/14529/de>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLllyICpAlI>;

<https://www.15min.lt/video/meet-the-winners-of-the-wash-media-awards-86682>;

<https://chizony.wordpress.com/2012/08/17/nigerian-journalist-wins-2012-wash-media-award/amp/>)

I was the winner, Development Journalism Media Awards (print category), courtesy of the Osaigbovo Ogbemudia Foundation, Benin City, Edo State, on 30th December, 2015; awardee, Environment Media awards, courtesy of the Lagos State Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in Lagos State, Nigeria on 21st November, 2012; finalist in the 2012 national art competition, in Lagos state, in July, 2012) with an interactive media art work on consequences of water pollution and gas flaring on the population/environment.

On 31st January, 2019, I was invited by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to feature my CartoonAFRICA SDG Cartoon campaign at the 2019 UN SDG Global Festival of Action which held in Bonn (Germany) from May 2 to May 4, 2019, and after exhibiting at the UN SDG global festival in Bonn, I was approached by Bonnections, an NGO in Bonn (Germany) for collaboration to take the CartoonAFRICA cartoons from the global festival to some local events in Bonn, to broaden audience engagement on human rights, migration, children/youth empowerment, gender issues, etc. in the context of securing Africa of the future; I can go on and on testifying to what Art has made me become in life. I have no regrets whatsoever following my childhood interest and hobby: drawing and cartooning!

Parents, what is your child's interest? Believe me that may be their God-ordained natural future. Don't truncate God's plan for your child's life, instead supported them to grow in their chosen path.

A child who loves drawing may become a renowned visual artist. A child who enjoys storytelling may become a celebrated author. A child fascinated by design may become an architect or innovator. A child who loves music may one day inspire millions. Parents must become the first supporters of their children's dreams. Listen to them. Encourage them. Provide opportunities for them to learn and grow. Celebrate their efforts, not only their achievements. I do this for my own children. I let them be their natural selves under heaven's influence. A word of encouragement from a parent can ignite confidence that lasts a lifetime.

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
BENIN CITY**

**Children's
DAY
PROGRAMME**

THEME:
**THE POWER OF IMAGINATION
CREATIVITY IN THE EYES OF
A NIGERIAN CHILD**

DATE: 2ND JUNE 2026
**VENUE: 34 URUBI IYARO,
BENIN CITY.**

*Let's
Imagine.
Create.
Inspire!*



Some of children whose artworks were exhibited take turns to explain the ideas behind their works to the audience

Power of imagination: Creativity in the eyes of Nigerian children

To our teachers and schools, your role is equally critical. Education is not merely about examinations and grades. True education develops the whole child. Our classrooms should encourage curiosity, creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. Schools should create environments where artistic talents are discovered and nurtured through art clubs, exhibitions, competitions, creative projects, and mentorship opportunities. Unfortunately, our schools are shrinking the space for creative and cultural arts today with the erroneous excuse that art is not lucrative. Who said so? And by the way, money should not be our motivations for deploying our imaginative powers. Service to humanity should be our first incentive!

The world is rapidly changing, and Nigeria must prepare children not only to consume knowledge but also to create knowledge and generate solutions.

Art is not a luxury. Creativity is not a waste of time. They are essential tools for national devel-

opment. This is the more reason that the National Gallery of Art (NGA) must urgently scale up the Saturday Art Club for children in Edo State to meet regularly and explore their creative prowess and imaginations through drawing, illustration, cartooning, painting and other ways to artistically express themselves, tell their own stories and communicate with the world around them.

The NGA should think out of the box and involve key stakeholders, organizations, creative interest groups and artists in mutually beneficial collaborations to achieve this all-important purpose.

The creative economy is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally. Nigerian artists, filmmakers, designers, animators, writers, and content creators are making remarkable impacts across the world. The next generation of creative leaders may very well be among the children gathered here today.

Therefore, let us commit ourselves to building a society where children's creativity is val-

ued, supported, and protected. Let us provide resources, mentorship, safe spaces, and opportunities that enable young talents to flourish. Let us teach our children that their ideas matter. Let us help them believe that their imagination has power.

And to every child here today, I leave you with this message:

You're a bundle of talent. Your strong interest in art is divine, it points to your purpose and assignment in life; so:

Dream boldly. Think creatively. Work diligently. Believe in yourself. Use your gifts to serve humanity and glorify God. Your imagina-

tion is a seed. If you nurture it with learning, discipline, hard work, and faith, it can grow into something extraordinary.

The artist of tomorrow is here today. The innovator of tomorrow is here today. The leader of tomorrow is here today. The future of Nigeria is sitting before us.

May your creativity continue to shine brightly. May your talents blossom. May your dreams become reality.

Happy Children's Day, and thank you all for listening.

God bless the children of Nigeria.

Thank you.

NGA Benin hosts 2026 National Children's Day art program

The National Gallery of Art (NGA) Benin City, on Tuesday, 2nd of June, 2026, in their determination to keep the dream alive at all odds, organized an art program to mark the annual National Children's Day, 2026, and to foster the development of art and creativity in the lives of children.

The theme of the program was "The Power of Imagination: creativity in the eyes of a Nigerian child."

The participating schools present at the occasion included Phelim High School, Pioneer Education Center, Jatto Memorial Christian College, Osa Osula Secondary School, and others.

Speaking during his speech as chairman of the occasion, Mr. Francis Umendu Odupute of The Nigerian Observer Newspapers and founder of the Francodus Art Foundation (FAF), charged parents to be observant of their children keen interests, pointing out that "a child's interest is their natural future."

Mr. Odupute later prayed and declared the children's art exhibition open, and various participating students whose artworks were on the exhibition took turns to explain what their creations were all about to other participants and views present at the occasion.

According to the organizers, NGA Benin

City, some of the winners who emerged from the participating schools in Benin City included:

Painting category, Secondary School:

First position – Igberais Victorious (Pioneer Education Center);

Painting category, Primary School:

1st position – Ebewole Divine (Phelim High School)

Second position in Painting category, Primary School – Amarise Igioh (Phelim High School)

Painting, Primary School:

3rd position – Joy Eko (Phelim High School)

Graphics, Secondary School

1st position – Okonkwo Favor (Phelim high school);

Second position – Odigie O. Davina (Phelim High School);

Fashion Design category:

Secondary School:

Rich Eromosele Confidence (Osa-Osula Secondary School)



Chairman of the occasion, Francis U. Odupute, delivers his speech during the National Children's Day art program organized by the National Gallery of Art (NGA) in Benin City.



Francis Odupute prays to declare the children's art exhibition open at the event



Some of children whose artworks were exhibited take turns to explain the ideas behind their works to the audience



NEWS**Foreign****Israeli strikes kill 11 people in Gaza City, medics say**

At least 11 Palestinians have been killed, including women and children, and dozens wounded in Israeli air strikes across Gaza City, according to medical sources and eyewitnesses.

Israeli aircraft struck at least four residential buildings in the Sheikh Radwan and Tel al-Hawa neighbourhoods and Shati refugee camp in the early hours of Thursday, causing powerful explosions and panic among residents.

Among videos posted on social media, said to be the aftermath of the attacks, were distressing images of people trying to leave a building engulfed in fire in Shati camp.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Witnesses told the BBC that three Israeli helicopters hovered briefly over Gaza City's coastline before launching simultaneous strikes on the buildings.

Among those reportedly targeted was a Hamas commander in northern Gaza, Hassan Labad, who was killed along with his wife and three of their children.

A spokesman for the Hamas-run Civil Defence agency

said the dead included two children with disabilities from the Labad family and three women.

Israel has carried out repeated air strikes in Gaza despite the US-brokered ceasefire deal, accusing Hamas of rearming and rebuilding its forces.

More than 940 people have been killed since the ceasefire took effect last October, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

And with the world's attention focused on conflicts elsewhere in the Middle East, the situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate, with a worsening humanitarian crisis and reported plans by Israel to increase the area of land under its control to 70%.

The Gaza war was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, when about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others were taken hostage.

Israel responded by launching a military campaign in Gaza, during which more than 72,950 people have been killed, according to the territory's health ministry.



ISRAELI STRIKES:

Smoke billows from the Nabatieh area in southern Lebanon following an Israeli strike on Wednesday.

Israel and Lebanon agree to implement ceasefire if Hezbollah stops attacks

Israel and Lebanon have agreed to renew their fragile ceasefire and create a number of "pilot" security zones inside Lebanon in which Hezbollah operatives would be banned, the US state department has announced.

A joint statement said the agreement was "contingent on a complete cessation" of attacks by the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah, among other conditions.

The three countries also "rejected any attempt, by any state or non-state actor, to hold Lebanon's future hostage".

The agreement was announced in Washington on Wednesday, after Israeli strikes killed at least nine people in southern Lebanon and Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel.

Lebanese state media reported that Israeli strikes continued in the south of Lebanon on Thursday, with at least one

strike causing casualties.

Hezbollah, a Shia Muslim militia, political party and social movement, is Lebanon's most powerful group. With support from Iran, it has built an armed force more formidable than the Lebanese army and has fought a series of conflicts with Israel. It is designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel and many other countries, including the UK and US.

The agreement between Israel and Lebanon, reached after a fourth round of US-mediated talks, is contingent on the "evacuation of all [Hezbollah] operatives" from an area between the Israeli border and the Litani river, about 30km (19 miles) to the north, which is currently occupied by Israeli ground forces.

It said the US would help guide the creation of "pilot zones" in which the Lebanese Armed Forces will take exclusive con-

trol of the territory to the exclusion of all non-state actors".

It did not include any maps to indicate where the pilot zones would be located, or any explanation of how they might work in practice.

The agreement followed a partial ceasefire announced on Monday, which Lebanon said would see Israel refrain from bombing the Lebanese capital, Beirut, in exchange for Hezbollah not attacking Israel.

The two countries' representatives will meet again on 22 June to hold further talks "with a view toward reaching a comprehensive agreement".

Hezbollah told the BBC that it would comment officially in due course.

Far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir branded the agreement a "serious mistake", claiming it would allow Hezbollah to "grow stronger".

Lebanon was drawn into the war between the US, Israel and Iran on 2 March, when Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel in retaliation for an Israeli strike that killed Iran's supreme leader. Israel responded with an air campaign across Lebanon and a ground invasion in the south.

A US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon on 16 April failed to stop the fighting, and last week Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the Israeli military to intensify its strikes on Hezbollah and advance deeper into Lebanon in response to drone and rocket attacks on communities in northern Israel.

At least 3,516 people have been killed in Lebanon since the start of the war, according to the country's health ministry. Its figures do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Miracle on Everest: Guide believed dead spotted crawling down ice

A Nepali climbing guide thought to have died on Mount Everest has been found crawling down to Base Camp, six days after he was last seen alive.

Dawa Sherpa was last seen above Camp 3, at around 7,500m (24,600ft), while coming down the mountain after summiting.

Hopes for his survival were slim as the air at that altitude is thin - but on Thursday, a cleaning crew spotted the experienced climber, who had frostbite on his hands but appeared to be in good health, sliding slowly down.

"Dawa managed to survive against all odds for days. It's nothing short of a miracle," said Pemba Sherpa, executive director of 8K Expeditions which was overseeing search efforts. "This is a true self-rescue."

Five people have died so far in this year's climbing, three of them Nepalis who were involved in the Everest preparations, according to news agency AFP.

More than 1,000 reached the Everest summit this season, making it the busiest on record.

Dawa Sherpa - also known as Hillary Dawa Sherpa after famed mountaineer Edmund Hillary - was "slowly sliding through" the Khumbu Icefall toward Base Camp when he was found, Pemba Sherpa said.

"As far as I know, no one has survived alone at that altitude on Everest so far. This is a miracle to have survived for six days alone and descended safe. I think he must have lived inside the tents to keep himself safe," said Pemba Sherpa.

Dawa Sherpa is "awake and undergoing treatment", according to Nishant Dhakal, a doctor in the intensive care unit of Kathmandu's HAMS Hospital.

"He recognised me ... is good and speaks," his daughter Mhendo Lhamo Sherpa told Reuters news agency after visiting him. "We are happy."

Before he was found, the 52-year-old's wife told AFP that she had offered last rite prayers for his soul.

On Wednesday, Chris Thrall, a climber and former British Royal Marine, posted a tribute on Instagram for Dawa Sherpa, thinking he had died on the mountain. In the video, Thrall recalled that Dawa Sherpa had "sat down for a rest with his backpack" as they descended from Camp 4, the highest campsite before the summit.

"And I turned and I said, 'Hillary, are you okay, brother?' He said, 'Yes, yes, fine Chris, please go, go!'" Thrall said. "This is nothing new, you know, I'd go ahead, he'd go ahead."

As Thrall went down he found a struggling Polish climber who was part of their group, and they continued descending together. But Dawa Sherpa never caught up with them.

"It had been a long summit push. What should have been five days to the summit and back took us 11 days, that's how challenging the conditions were," Thrall said.

"So, do I go back for Sherpa, who's probably going to rock up and be fine, as he has done hundreds of times before?" he added.

US House delivers rebuke to Trump as it votes to halt Iran war

The US House of Representatives has passed a measure that seeks to halt President Donald Trump from taking further military action in Iran.

The 215-208 vote, which is largely symbolic, was successful after four Republicans joined Democrats in a public show of disapproval of the war, which began in February.

The vote was to adopt the war powers resolution, which requires Trump to withdraw US forces or seek congressional approval for the conflict.

It is unclear how much legal force this House measure would have. The White House has dismissed the merits of the resolution, saying it is an unconstitutional attempt to restrict presidential power.

But its passing is significant because it adds to the pressure on

the White House to find an end to the Iran War, as petrol prices have spiked and public opposition to the war has increased.

This was the fourth attempt by the House to rein in Trump's war powers. The Senate advanced a similar resolution in May but has yet to hold a full floor vote.

The measure considered on Wednesday was a concurrent resolution. If it is also passed by the Republican-controlled US Senate, it would not require the president's signature, though it could be subject to a legal challenge.

The vote on Wednesday marked the latest sign of division within Trump's Republican Party, coming just days after a revolt by conservatives in Congress led his administration to pull back plans for a \$1.8b "anti-weaponization"

fund for political allies.

In the House, Republicans Thomas Massie, Brian Fitzpatrick, Tom Barrett, and Warren Davidson joined a united front from Democrats to pass Wednesday's resolution. Democrat Jared Golden of Maine, who had previously voted against similar measures, gave his support this time.

"Congress alone declares war, that's something certainly we need to be protective of," Barrett, a Republican from Michigan, said. Asked if he was worried about retribution from Trump for his vote, Barrett said: "I vote my conscience for what I think is right and willing to accept that."

Representative Gregory Meeks, the leading Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs committee, described the vote as "a significant bipartisan rebuke of President Trump's ille-

gal and costly war in Iran and the first step toward ending it once and for all".

Meeks said that Trump had failed to achieve the war's stated aims while pushing up fuel prices at home and making a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear programme even more difficult to achieve.

"The passage of this [measure] today signals a significant turning point: more and more Republicans are listening to their constituents who do not want another open-ended war in the Middle East," Meeks, who co-sponsored the resolution, said.

The US and Israel launched strikes against Iran on 28 February. Iran responded by attacking Israel and US-allied states in the Gulf, and effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for global shipping.

Foreign

NEWS

Ukraine accused of killing four in occupied Crimea

Russian-backed authorities in the occupied region of Crimea in Ukraine say at least four people have been killed in the latest wave of Ukrainian strikes on the peninsula.

Three people were killed and seven wounded in one of the attacks on what were described as "non-residential facilities" in the regional capital, Simferopol. It appears to be the first attack resulting in fatalities there. Ukraine said they had hit a fuel depot.

In a separate incident, one person was killed and three injured in an attack on a commuter train travelling to the city of Kerch, the Russia-installed Crimea leader said.

It marks the third day in a row it has been accused of targeting civilian transport in its occupied territories.

In response to the BBC's request for comment, Ukrainian officials did not explicitly admit carrying out the attacks, but said Ukraine only attacked military targets and accused Russia of waging a campaign of propaganda to create a "parallel reality".

The latest strikes come amid a recently-launched Ukrainian campaign of drone strikes against Russian supply routes in the occupied parts of the country.

They have caused widespread fuel shortages in Crimea, with the authorities introducing fuel rationing and suspending fuel sales to residents of Sevastopol for part of Wednesday.

The government in Kyiv says attacks on targets in Russia and occupied parts of Ukraine are key to undermining Moscow's

ability to wage war.

Kyiv has recently expanded its attacks inside Russia, too.

On Wednesday, it carried out a strike on the outskirts of St Petersburg, hours before the opening of a major economic forum designed to attract foreign investment into the country.

According to President Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukrainian drones had hit several locations in Russia, including the oil terminal and a naval base in the nearby town of Kronstadt - the main outpost of the Russian Navy's Baltic Fleet.

The St Petersburg Economic Forum - once dubbed the "Russian Davos" - is a flagship event on the Russian political agenda.

Until Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it used to be attended by high-profile Western dele-

gation, including heads of state.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the occupation of Crimea in 2014.

In the four years since Russia's invasion began, Ukraine has developed a booming defence sector. Kyiv is now able to regularly hit targets within Russia, focusing its efforts on energy infrastructure and oil facilities, which it sees as fueling the Russian war machine.

On Wednesday, eight people were killed after a drone hit a passenger bus travelling in the Russia-controlled Donetsk region of Ukraine, a Moscow-installed official said.

Moscow, meanwhile, continues to strike Ukrainian cities, resulting in regular civilian casualties. On Monday night alone, at least 22 people were killed in combined missile and drone strikes across Ukraine.

Bondi Beach shooting hero charged with assault

The man who disarmed one of the alleged perpetrators of the deadly Bondi Beach shooting has been charged with assault.

Ahmed al Ahmed was hailed as a hero after intervening in the attack at a Jewish event in December, in which 15 people were killed and dozens injured.

The 44-year-old is accused of having assaulted his father in March, Australian media report. He has been charged with domestic violence common assault as well as stalking and intimidation.

He has denied the allegations, telling broadcaster ABC they were "not true at all".

Footage from the mass

shooting at an event to mark Hanukkah showed Ahmed wrestling a gun from one of the alleged attackers.

He was shot several times in the process and subsequently visited by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in hospital, who called him the "best of our country".

A fundraiser to support him raised more than A\$2.5m (£1.24m; \$1.7m).

Ahmed is due to appear in Sydney's Bankstown Local Court on 29 June.

The Bondi attack was Australia's deadliest mass shooting since 1996. Police declared it a terrorist incident targeting the Jewish community.

Hezbollah rejects renewed ceasefire agreed by Israel and Lebanon

The Lebanese armed group Hezbollah has emphatically rejected the terms of a US-backed ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon.

In a strongly-worded statement, the Iran-backed group's leader Naim Qassem said negotiations had been "futile" and "humiliating" for Lebanon, and rejected categorically by "broad segments of the Lebanese people".

It comes after Israel and Lebanon announced a renewal of their fragile ceasefire with the creation of "pilot" security zones inside Lebanon in which Hezbollah operatives would be banned.

In a joint statement released on Wednesday by the US State Department, the three countries said the deal was "contingent on a complete cessation" of fire by Hezbollah.

But responding on Thursday, the leader of Hezbollah - which was not part of the talks - said the "supposed ceasefire", interpreted as Hezbollah halting fire and withdrawing fighters from the southern front with Israel, amounted to surrender and would fulfil Israel's objectives.

The mood was similar on the streets of Beirut's southern suburbs - a stronghold of Hezbollah, also known as Dahieh - with a storekeeper expressing doubts about the agreement.

Sami, who has run his business there for 25 years, told the BBC: "You cannot have a ceasefire from one side, it's going to be an all side or no ceasefire."

There had been strikes in Lebanon on Thursday, he said. If this was supposed to be a truce, what did that make it?

"This is surrender. This is not a peace agreement. This is a surrender agreement," he added.

Across the road, Hadi, whose family store has been around for 35 years, said he saw no hope - and that this was not a new feeling.

"My generation, my dad's generation, my grandpa's generation, they didn't see anything of hope from these people - not necessarily the Israeli

people. You can say the Israeli government," he said.

The agreement between Israel and Lebanon, reached after a fourth round of US-mediated talks in Washington, is contingent on the "evacuation of all [Hezbollah] operatives" from an area between the Israeli border and the Litani river, about 30km (19 miles) to the north, which is currently occupied by Israeli ground forces.

According to the deal, the US would help guide the creation of "pilot zones in which the Lebanese Armed Forces will take exclusive control of the territory to the exclusion of all non-state actors".

It did not include any maps to indicate where the pilot zones would be located, or any explanation of how they might work in practice.

The agreement followed a partial ceasefire announced on Monday, which Lebanon said would see Israel refrain from bombing the Lebanese capital, Beirut, in exchange for Hezbollah not attacking Israel.

The two countries' representatives will meet again on 22 June to hold further talks "with a view toward reaching a comprehensive agreement".

Hezbollah, a Shia Muslim militia, political party and social movement, is Lebanon's most powerful group.

With support from Iran, it has built an armed force more formidable than the Lebanese army and has fought a series of conflicts with Israel. It is designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel and many other countries, including the UK and US.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said the ceasefire "could be implemented within 24 hours of its final approval" by all concerned parties.

Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the Israeli military would "for the time being, continue its fire and operations on the ground" in order to "dismantle terrorist infrastructure in the area".



REGION OF CRIMEA:

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the occupation of Crimea in 2014

Germany blames Russia for 'bitter defeat' in UN Security Council bid

Germany's foreign minister says support for Ukraine and Israel may have cost votes after Berlin failed to secure a rotating spot on the UN Security Council.

Johann Wadephul described losing out to Portugal and Austria as a "bitter defeat" after a vote on which countries would become one of the five new members of the council was held on Wednesday evening.

"There is our firm support for Ukraine, the fact that Russia does not want such a voice at the Security Council," Wadephul said, adding it was "no se-

cret" Russia had stirred up sentiment against Germany.

There are five permanent members of the UN Security Council - China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US - and 10 temporary ones.

"We have always taken a clear stance on certain issues, and these are positions that not all member states share," Wadephul said.

"The fact that Germany must always assume a special responsibility for Israel in the Middle East conflict may also have cost votes," he said.

Wadephul also in part blamed his country's late entry into the race for the two-year

term on the Security Council.

Russia has not responded to accusations it lobbied against Germany's membership.

Germany secured 104 votes in its push for one of the two places on the council for the Western European and Others Group, with Portugal getting 134 votes in its favour and Austria 131.

Kyrgyzstan, Trinidad and Tobago and Zimbabwe were also elected to the Security Council, which is the only UN body that can make legally binding decisions such as imposing sanctions and authorising use of force.

Missing out on the spot is a

blow for German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

He has been beleaguered at home and now embarrassed abroad, his critics in opposition parties say, given he has advertised himself as a man who would boost Germany's standing on the international stage.

Merz said Germany would continue to be a firm supporter of the international system and congratulated Austria and Portugal.

"This result does not alter the tasks we face at the United Nations. Germany remains a reliable pillar of the multilateral system," he said.

Feature



PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU

2027 in sight: The early political calculations shaking Nigeria

CLARETH SOLOMON

The 2027 general elections are still 20 months away. INEC has not even released the timetable. But in Abuja hotels, Lagos clubs, and state government houses, the 2027 game has already started.

Ministers are visiting their home states “to thank constituents.” Governors are hosting “unity dinners” for party leaders. Opposition figures who were enemies in 2023 are now taking selfies together.

Nigerians have not recovered from 2023, but politicians are already calculating 2027. This feature maps the early moves, the alliances, and what it means for democracy.

TINUBU'S RE-ELECTION MACHINE: CONSOLIDATION MODE

President Bola Tinubu and the APC are not hiding their plan: re-election in 2027. The strategy is clear:

Control Governors: 21 of 36 governors are APC. The party is funding their projects so they can deliver “dividends of democracy” before 2027. A governor who performs will campaign for Tinubu.

Economic Reform Narrative: The government is pushing “pain now, gain later.” By 2027, they hope inflation is 12%, naira is stable, and refineries are working. Campaign slogan will be “Stay the Course.”

Southwest + North Alliance*: Tinubu's team is working to keep Southwest solid and negotiate with

Northern governors. The VP, Kashim Shettima, is touring Northern states weekly.

A top APC chieftain said off-record: “2027 will be about performance, not ethnicity. If roads are built and food prices drop, Nigerians will vote again.”

PDP: THE GIANT WITH BROKEN LEGS

The Peoples Democratic Party won 12 states in 2023 but is in crisis. The Atiku vs Wike battle has split the party into two camps.

Atiku's Camp: Wants PDP to remain main opposition and negotiate merger with other parties. He is 79 in 2027, so age is an issue.

Wike's Camp: The FCT Minister controls Rivers PDP structure and is working with APC. Many PDP governors are quietly aligning with Tinubu for survival.

The PDP has not held a proper NEC meeting since 2024. Without unity, 2027 will be a disaster. Party elders like Chief Bode George are begging for reconciliation, but trust is gone.

LABOUR PARTY: VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS

Peter Obi's 6.1 million votes in 2023 shocked Nigeria. Labour Party went from zero to national force. But success brought internal war.

The Julius Abure vs Lamidi Apapa leadership crisis has paralyzed the party. INEC does not know who to recognize. Members are defecting to

APC and PDP.

Peter Obi has not said if he will run again in 2027. His supporters want him to, but they need a united party structure. As of May 2026, LP has no clear candidate and no money.

THE COALITION WHISPERS: THIRD FORCE RISING?

Since late 2025, meetings have been happening in Lagos and Abuja. Attendees include Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi, Nasir El-Rufai, Rotimi Amaechi, and Rauf Aregbesola.

The idea: form a “mega opposition” to challenge APC in 2027. The model is 2015 when APC merged to defeat PDP.

But there are problems:

1. ***Ego*:** Who will be presidential candidate? Atiku? Obi? El-Rufai?
2. ***Structure*:** APC controls government machinery. Coalition has no governors, no local government chairmen.
3. ***Trust*:** Many of these leaders fought each other bitterly in 2023.

A coalition insider said: “We are talking, but talk is cheap. Until we agree on one candidate by June 2026, APC will sleep well.”

THE GOVERNORS: 2027 KINGMAKERS

In Nigerian politics, governors decide elections. They control state INEC, police, and money.

***APC Governors*:** 21 of them will campaign for Tinubu. If they deliver projects in their states, it helps APC

narrative.

***PDP Governors*:** 10 of them. Most are in survival mode. Some like Seyi Makinde of Oyo are building independent brand for 2031, not 2027.

***LP/New Governors*:** Only 1 — Alex Otti of Abia. He is performing well but LP crisis is hurting him.

Governors in swing states like Kano, Kaduna, Rivers, and Delta will be most courted. Whoever controls them controls 2027.

VOTER ISSUES: WHAT WILL DECIDE 2027?

Politicians are calculating, but voters will decide based on 3 things:

1. **Economy:** If bag of rice is N50,000 in 2027 vs N92,000 today, Tinubu wins. If it is N120,000, opposition wins.
2. **Security:** School kidnappings, banditry, and herder-farmer clashes must reduce. Nigerians will not vote for insecurity.
3. **Youths and Jobs:** 60% of voters are under 35. They want jobs, not rallies. Whoever speaks their language on TikTok and X will win.

A 24-year-old voter in Benin said: “I don't care about party. I care about salary and light. Show me your plan, not your poster.”

CAMPAIGN EARLY, GOVERN NOW

2027 is coming, but governance cannot stop. Nigerians are watching. They will forgive a politician who delivers roads and hospitals, even if he campaigns early.

They will punish a politician who abandons governance for 2027 calculations.

As Professor Attahiru Jega warned, “Early politicking kills governance. But late politicking loses elections.”

The smart politician will do both: deliver now, calculate later. Because in 2027, Nigerians will vote with their stomach, their children's school fees, and their light bill — not party loyalty.



A top APC chieftain said off-record: “2027 will be about performance, not ethnicity. If roads are built and food prices drop, Nigerians will vote again.”

FEATURE

From budget to bulldozers: 'Why Nigeria's development projects fail'

EJEMBI SILAS

On paper, Nigeria is building. The 2025 budget allocated N13.8 trillion for capital projects. The Minister of Works announced 2,604km of roads. The Minister of Health promised 20 new federal hospitals. Ground-breaking ceremonies happen every week with gold-painted shovels and long speeches.

But drive 30km out of Abuja to Kwali, or 20km out of Benin to Ugbowo, and the story changes. You will see rusted "project signboards" standing beside half-built bridges. You will see hospitals with only a foundation and goats grazing inside. You will see roads that were "80% complete" in 2020 and are still 80% complete in 2026.

Nigeria budgets trillions. But development crawls. Why? This feature investigates the dangerous gap between budget allocation and actual delivery.

BUDGET VS EXECUTION: THE BIG GAP

Every December, the National Assembly passes a budget with huge capital votes. Citizens get excited. Then the year starts, and nothing moves.

BudgIT's 2025 "Budget Performance Report" shows that only 58% of capital budget was released by Q4. Of that, only 43% was actually spent on projects. The rest went to "overheads" and "consultancy."

In Edo State, the 2024 budget allocated N45bn for road construction. By December, only N18bn was spent, and just 112km of roads were completed out of 300km promised. The rest of the money? Virement, delays, and "administrative issues."

A permanent secretary in a federal ministry, who asked not to be named, said: "We get the budget in March. Procurement takes 6 months. By September, rains start. Contractors say they cannot work. By December, we are back to begging for rollover."

THE ABANDONED PROJECTS CRISIS

Nigeria has over 11,000 abandoned federal projects according to the Ministry of Works. State governments have thousands more.

Example 1: Lagos-Badagry Expressway

Started in 2010. Budgeted at N63bn. 14 years later, it is still incomplete. Drivers spend 4 hours on a 60km journey.

Example 2: National Children's Hospital, Abuja

Foundation laid in 2001 by President Obasanjo. In 2026, only the main block exists. No equipment, no staff.

Example 3: Benin-Asaba Road

This 45km road has been "under construction" for 20 years. Each government re-awards it. Each contractor does 5km and leaves.

The cost is not just money. It is lives. Ambulances cannot reach hos-



ROAD CONSTRUCTION

pitals. Farmers cannot move produce. Investors run away.

WHY PROJECTS DIE: 5 KILLERS

Poor Planning and Design

Many projects start without proper survey or design. A road is awarded, then halfway the contractor discovers the soil is swampy. New bill, new delay. The Lagos-Ibadan rail had to redesign 3 bridges after work started. That added 2 years.

Bureaucracy and Procurement Delays

The Public Procurement Act is good, but slow. It takes 180 days average to award a contract. By the time approval comes, inflation has eaten 30% of the budget.

Corruption and Kickbacks

Contractors often pay 10-15% "mobilization fee" to officials before work starts. That money is never spent on site. When the project stalls, everyone blames "funding."

Lack of Continuity

New governor, new project. New minister, new priority. The Abuja Metro rail was 95% complete in 2015, then abandoned for 5 years until 2024. Each administration wants its own "signature project."

Community and Security Issues

In the North, bandits chase contractors off sites. In the South-East, IPOB sit-at-home stops work 2 days weekly. In Niger Delta, youths block sites until "settlement."

JECTS ACTUALLY WORK

Not all is lost. Some projects prove Nigeria can deliver when there is focus: Lagos Blue Line Rail: Started 2012, completed 2023. Carries 250,000 pas-

“
Nigeria does not lack money. It lacks discipline. The 2026 budget has N15.8 trillion for capital projects. That is enough to fix 5,000km of roads, build 200 hospitals, and 1,000 schools if spent well.”

sengers daily. Governor Sanwo-Olu kept one contractor, one design, and protected funding through 3 administrations.

Kano Solar Irrigation: 2,000 solar pumps installed in 2025 using FAAC money. Farmers now farm all year. Project succeeded because Kano State gave it to one agency, tracked it monthly, and involved community leaders.

Edo SUBEB Classrooms: 12 new classrooms built in Ekiadolor Primary School in 6 months. Why? SUBEB chairman visited site weekly and fired the first contractor for delay.

The lesson: political will + single agency + community involvement = delivery.

THE ROLE OF CITIZENS: FROM SPECTATORS TO WATCHDOGS

Citizens must stop clapping at ground-breaking. They must ask: "Where is the completion date?"

Tools exist:

Tracka.ng: Take photo of abandoned project, upload with location. Government responds within 72 hours in 40% of cases.

BudgIT: Publishes "Track Your Constituency Project" so you know what was budgeted for your LGA.

Open Contracting Portal: FG now uploads contract details online. Citizens can check contractor name and amount.

In Plateau, citizens used Tracka to expose an N200m water project abandoned for 5 years. After viral tweets, the government completed it in 4 months.

WHAT MUST CHANGE NOW

1. Multi-Year Funding: Stop budgeting projects yearly. Approve 3-year funding for big projects so contractors have certainty.

2. Project Bank: Create a national database of all ongoing projects with GPS, budget, and completion date. Update monthly.

3. Punish Abandonment: Blacklist contractors who abandon projects for 10 years. Jail officials who approve payment for no work.

4. Community Monitoring: Each LGA should have "Project Monitoring Committee" with youth, women, and traditional rulers. They must sign off before contractor gets paid.

5. Less Ceremony, More Work: Reduce ground-breaking for projects that have no money in budget. Nigerians are tired of "flag-off politics."

FROM CEREMONY TO COMPLETION

Nigeria does not lack money. It lacks discipline. The 2026 budget has N15.8 trillion for capital projects. That is enough to fix 5,000km of roads, build 200 hospitals, and 1,000 schools if spent well.

But budget is not development. Bulldozer is development. Completed hospital is development. Child learning in new classroom is development.

As BudgIT founder Oluseun Onigbinde said, "A budget without execution is just a wish list."

The next time you see a gold shovel and a long speech, ask one question: "When will you finish?" Until we demand answers, Nigeria will keep budgeting trillions and delivering poverty.

SUCCESS STORIES: WHEN PRO-



OYO STATE TEACHERS PROTEST

Oyo kidnap horror: 60 days on, efforts to free pupils and teachers

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

On March 28, 2026, at 2:15pm, gunmen in military uniform stormed Graceland Private School in Oriire LGA, Oyo State. In 7 minutes, they herded 45 people into 3 Hilux vans — 38 pupils aged 6-14, and 7 teachers. Then they vanished into the thick forest between Oyo and Kwara.

Today is May 26. Exactly 60 days later. Parents have aged 10 years. The school compound is silent. Swing sets move in the wind with no children laughing.

Kidnappers demanded N500 million ransom and 5 motorcycles. Governor Seyi Makinde said “Oyo does not pay ransom.” The Federal Government launched “Operation Restore Peace.”

So far, 12 children have been released in batches after “negotiations.” 33 people — 26 pupils and 7 teachers — remain in captivity. This is the story of those 60 days.

THE ATTACK: SEVEN MINUTES OF TERROR

Graceland School has 210 pupils. It is a low-fee private school for farmers’ children. On that Friday, pupils were writing mid-term exams.

Survivor, 13-year-old Tolu, said: “We heard ‘Boko! Boko!’ Then men with guns entered. They shot in the air. Our teacher Mrs. Adebayo told us to lie down. But they dragged her and us outside.”

The gunmen moved fast. They knew the school had no security fence, no guard, no CCTV. They used

the forest route that connects Oyo to Baruten LGA in Kwara — a known bandit corridor.

Within 2 hours, they were deep in the forest. Phone signals died.

RESCUE EFFORTS: ARMY, DSS, AND LOCAL HUNTERS

Within 24 hours, 3 forces were deployed:

Nigerian Army: 145 Battalion from Oyo sent troops with drones.

DSS: Technical team tracked ransom calls.

Amotekun + Local Hunters: 200 local hunters who know the forest led the search.

“Operation Restore Peace” commanders say the forest is 400 square kilometers with caves and rivers. Kidnappers move captives every 3 days to avoid detection.

On April 15, 5 children aged 6-8 were released. Parents said “old women” brought them to a mosque at night and ran away. No ransom was paid.

On May 3, another 7 pupils were released after community elders negotiated. Kidnappers said the children were “sick and crying too much.”

But 33 remain. Military sources say the main group is being held by a faction loyal to a notorious bandit called “Dogo Sule.”

FAMILIES’ AGONY: “WE JUST WANT OUR CHILDREN”

At a meeting with parents in Ibadan last week, the pain was raw.

Mrs. Funmilayo, mother of 9-year-old Damilola: “I have not cooked since March 28. I just sit and cry. Damilola

loves rice and chicken. If they give her food, will she remember me?”

Mr. Adebayo, husband of kidnapped teacher Mrs. Adebayo: “She is diabetic. She needs insulin daily. We don’t know if she is alive. Government, please bring her back.”

Parents formed “Graceland Parents Forum.” They contribute N2,000 weekly to hire private negotiators. But they say they trust government more.

”
Kidnappers demanded N500 million ransom and 5 motorcycles. Governor Seyi Makinde said “Oyo does not pay ransom.” The Federal Government launched “Operation Restore Peace.”

Psychologist Dr. Wale Akinyemi, counseling families, says: “This is ‘ambiguous loss.’ Parents cannot grieve because children may be alive. It destroys the mind.”

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: WHAT OYO AND FG ARE DOING

Oyo State: Governor Makinde approved N2bn for Oyo Security Trust Fund. He bought 50 patrol vehicles and 100 motorcycles for Amotekun. He visited parents twice and promised “no child will be left behind.”

Federal Government: Minister of Defence visited Ibadan. NAF jets now do daily surveillance. The National Safe Schools Initiative is being revived to fence 1,000 schools nationwide.

No Ransom Policy: FG insists it will not pay ransom to avoid encouraging more kidnaps. But sources say “logistics support” was given to negotiators for food and medicals for captives.

EXPERT VIEW: WHY SCHOOLS ARE EASY TARGETS

Security expert, retired Colonel Hassan, explains: “Schools in rural Oyo are soft targets. No fence, no guard, no alarm. One motorcycle can carry 3 men. One AK-47 can control 50 children.”

He says kidnappers target schools because:

1. Children bring quick ransom — parents panic.
2. Government gets negative press, so it negotiates fast.
3. Forest corridors in Oyo-Kwara border are ungoverned.

WAY FORWARD: ENDING SCHOOL KIDNAPS

Experts agree on 5 urgent steps:

1. Fence All Schools: Use Safe Schools Initiative money to build perimeter fence and employ guards in 10,000 rural schools.
2. Community Policing: Train and pay local vigilantes. They know the forest and the people.
3. Technology: Install panic buttons and CCTV in schools. NAF drones must patrol 24/7.
4. Prosecute Kidnappers: When caught, try them publicly. Death penalty for kidnapping children must be enforced.
5. Address Poverty: Many bandits are jobless youths. Government must create jobs in rural areas so forest is not a hiding place.

BRING THEM HOME

60 days is too long for a child to sleep in the forest. Too long for a mother to wait.

The 12 children released said captors fed them once daily — garri and water. They slept on bare floor. They were beaten when they cried for parents.

Nigeria cannot normalize this. Every Nigerian child must be safe in school.

As Governor Makinde said at the last parents’ meeting: “We will not rest until the last child returns. Oyo will not bow to terrorists.”

Nigerians are praying. Soldiers are searching. Parents are waiting.

The only acceptable ending to this story is: All 33 have returned home safely.

FEATURE

From hunger to harvest: Can Nigeria feed itself in 5 years?



CHILDREN FROM THE NORTHERN NIGERIA

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Nigeria spends \$10 billion every year importing food. Wheat from Russia. Rice from Thailand. Milk from Netherlands. Fish from Norway.

Yet we have 84 million hectares of arable land — only 40% is farmed. We have 250 million people who must eat daily. We have rain for 6 months and sun for 12.

The math does not add up. So the question is: Can Nigeria feed itself before 2030?

President Tinubu says yes. His “Emergency Food Security Declaration” in 2023 launched N500bn for dry season farming and tractor distribution to 774 LGAs. But farmers in Benue say bandits took their tractors. Farmers in Kano say fertilizer never arrived.

This feature examines Nigeria’s agricultural promise, the obstacles, and the roadmap to move from hunger to harvest.

THE \$10 BILLION FOOD IMPORT BILL

Nigeria is Africa’s biggest food importer. Breakdown of 2025 imports:

Wheat: \$3.2bn — for bread and noodles

Rice: \$2.1bn — despite “rice revolution”

Milk & Dairy: \$1.5bn

Fish: \$1.8bn

Sugar: \$900m

This money leaves Nigeria and creates jobs in other countries. Meanwhile, Nigerian farmers complain of

low prices during harvest and hunger during planting season.

FAO says 30 million Nigerians faced acute food insecurity in 2025. That is 1 in 7 people.

THE POTENTIAL: NIGERIA’S AGRICULTURAL ADVANTAGE

Nigeria has everything needed to be a food superpower:

Land: 84 million hectares. Brazil, the world’s food basket, has 66 million.

Climate: Rain in South, irrigation in North. We can farm 3 times yearly.

Population: 250 million people = huge local market.

Youth: 60% of Nigerians are under 30. With training, they can farm smart.

Agric Minister Senator Abubakar Kyari says: “If we farm just 60% of our land, Nigeria will not only feed itself, we will export to Africa.”

SUCCESS STORIES: WHAT IS WORKING

Rice in Kebbi: Anchor Borrowers Programme gave loans to 400,000 rice farmers. Kebbi now produces 2 million tonnes yearly. Before 2015, it was importing rice.

Tomatoes in Kano: Dangote Tomato Plant in Kadawa processes 1,200 tonnes daily. Farmers have guaranteed market.

Cassava in Benue: Benue is called “Food Basket.” Small farmers now sell processed garri to Lagos companies at N12,000 per bag.

Agri-tech in Lagos: Startups like Farmcrowdy and ThriveAgric connect 500,000 small farmers to inves-

tors via apps. A youth in Oyo now earns N200,000 monthly managing 10 hectares on his phone.

These prove Nigerians can farm if there is market, money, and security.

THE BIG OBSTACLES: 5 WALLS BLOCKING HARVEST

Insecurity: Bandits and herders chase farmers off land in Benue, Plateau, Zamfara. 70% of farmers in North-Central abandoned farms in 2024.

Poor Roads: 40% of farm produce rots before reaching market because roads are bad. A bag of tomatoes bought at N8,000 in Jos sells for N35,000 in Lagos due to transport cost.

No Storage: Nigeria has storage for only 30% of harvest. Tomatoes waste every year. The government promised 1,000 silos but built only 200.

Climate Change: Rain now starts late and stops early. Drought in North, flood in South. Farmers plant and lose everything.

Low Mechanization*: 90% of Nigerian farmers still use hoe and cutlass. Average farm size is 1.2 hectares. You cannot feed a nation with cutlass.

SOLUTIONS: FARM OUR WAY OUT OF POVERTY

To feed 250 million people by 2030, Nigeria must do 5 things:

Secure Farms: Create “Farm Police” with drones and motorcycles to protect farmers. No security, no farming.

Mechanize: Give farmers access to tractors, not just one per LGA. Brazil has 1 tractor per 10 hectares. Nigeria has 1 per 1,000 hectares.

Build Roads + Storage: Connect every farming cluster with rural roads. Build cold rooms for tomatoes and pepper in every LGA.

Fund Youth in Agri-tech: Give N500,000 grants to young graduates who want to farm with technology. They will attract other youths.

Process, Don’t Just Produce: Stop exporting raw cocoa. Build chocolate factories. Stop exporting raw tomatoes. Build paste factories. Processing

creates jobs.

THE 5-YEAR ROADMAP: 2026-2030

If Nigeria follows this plan, we can cut food imports by 70% in 5 years:

2026: Secure 2 million hectares in North-Central for dry season farming.

2027: Build 500 rural roads and 200 storage facilities.

2028: Train 1 million youths in smart farming and give them land.

2029: Make Nigeria self-sufficient in rice, maize, and cassava.

2030: Export yam, sesame, and cashew to earn dollars.

Agric economist Dr. Ayoola Oduntan says: “It is not magic. It is policy + money + discipline. China did it. Vietnam did it. Nigeria can do it.”

FROM IMPORTS TO EXPORTS

In Makurdi, Mama Iorwuese farms 2 hectares of yam. Last year, herders destroyed her farm. This year, with community security, she harvested 200 bags. She sold 50 and kept 150 to feed her family and neighbors.

“I used to buy rice,” she said. “Now I sell yam. If government protects us, we will feed Nigeria.”

Nigeria’s choice is clear: Keep spending \$10bn yearly on imported food, or invest that money to make Nigerian farmers rich.

Food is not just stomach matter. It is security, jobs, and national pride.

The journey from hunger to harvest starts with one decision: Believe in Nigerian farmers and protect them.

If we do that, by 2030, “Made in Nigeria” will be on every food label.

”
This money leaves Nigeria and creates jobs in other countries. Meanwhile, Nigerian farmers complain of low prices during harvest and hunger during planting season

When doctors down tools: The FCT residents' strike and Nigeria's healthcare woes



DOCTORS PROTEST

CLARETH SOLOMON

For 72 hours in mid-May, the National Hospital Abuja looked abandoned. Beds were full but doctors were few. Resident doctors were on a warning strike over 6 months of unpaid arrears and poor hazard allowance.

In the emergency ward, Mrs. Fatima carried her 3-year-old son who had 40°C fever. She moved from nurse to nurse, begging, "Please, is there any doctor?" A nurse whispered, "Mama, only skeleton staff today. Go to a private clinic if you can afford it." Fatima could not. She sat on the floor and cried.

The strike was suspended after government promises, but the pain remains. It exposed a deeper crisis: Nigeria's healthcare system is collapsing, and doctors are leaving.

This feature examines why Nigerian doctors keep striking, what patients suffer, and how to fix a system that is bleeding both staff and patients.

1. THE STRIKE CYCLE: 2021, 2024, 2026

Resident doctors in Nigeria strike almost every 2 years. The pattern is the same: unpaid salaries, poor facilities, and broken promises.

2021: NARD went on strike for 2 months over insurance and allowances.

2024: 3-week strike over salary arrears.

2026 May: 3-day warning strike over 6 months' arrears.

Each strike ends with a Memorandum of Understanding. Each MoU is broken months later. Trust is gone.

Dr. Emeka Orji, NARD President, said, "We don't enjoy striking. But when a doctor cannot pay rent after saving lives, what choice do we have?"

2. THE BRAIN DRAIN: DOCTORS ARE LEAVING

Nigeria has only 35,000 doctors for 220 million people — 1 doctor to 6,200 patients. WHO recommends 1 doctor to 600 patients. We are 10 times short.

Worse, doctors are migrating. UK's GMC register shows 7,000 Nigerian doctors moved there since 2021. Saudi Arabia, US, and Canada are actively recruiting.

Dr. Zainab, a pediatrician, moved to the UK in 2024. "I loved my patients in Lagos. But I was on call every night, no gloves, and salary was N350,000. In the UK, I earn £5,000 monthly and sleep at home."

This "Japa" of doctors leaves those who remain overworked and burned out.

3. PATIENT STORIES: THE HUMAN COST

When doctors strike, the poor suffer most. Rich patients fly to India or the UK.

STORY 1: LABOR WARD, NATIONAL HOSPITAL

During the May strike, a woman in labor was turned away from LUTH Lagos because there was no doctor. She delivered in a taxi. Baby survived,

but the story went viral.

STORY 2: CANCER PATIENT, UCH IBADAN

Mr. Sule, 58, had chemotherapy scheduled during the strike. It was postponed 2 weeks. "Cancer does not wait for government," his daughter said.

Story 3: Accident Victim, Abuja*

A road accident victim bled for 4 hours because only one doctor was on duty. He survived but lost a leg.

Doctors are not villains. They are victims of a broken system. But patients pay the price.

4. ROOT CAUSES: WHY HEALTHCARE IS FAILING

1. Poor Funding: Nigeria spends 4.2% of GDP on health. WHO recommends 15%. The 2026 budget allocated only N2.5 trillion to health — less than what we spend on debt servicing.

2. Poor Infrastructure: Many teaching hospitals lack MRI machines, dialysis machines, and steady power. Generators consume 30% of hospital budgets.

3. *Poor Welfare*: Hazard allowance is N5,000 monthly — less than cost of data. Doctors buy their own gloves and masks.

4. *Insecurity*: Doctors are kidnapped in rural areas. 3 doctors were abducted in Kogi in 2025.

5. SOLUTIONS: HOW TO FIX HEALTHCARE

Health experts and doctors agree on 5 fixes:

1. Pay Doctors Well: Match salaries with responsibility. A doctor should not earn less than a banker with 5 years' experience. Pay arrears immediately.

2. Improve Facilities: Use FAAC and health insurance money to buy

equipment and fix power. The Basic Health Care Provision Fund must reach primary clinics.

3. Health Insurance for All: Only 5% of Nigerians have health insurance. NHIA Act 2022 makes it mandatory, but implementation is slow. If more people are insured, hospitals have money to pay staff.

4. Stop Brain Drain: Create "bonded scholarships" where doctors train abroad but must return for 5 years. Improve working conditions so they want to stay.

5. *Public-Private Partnership*: Government cannot do it alone. Private hospitals and NGOs must partner to expand access.

NO DOCTORS, NO HEALTH. NO HEALTH, NO NATION

After the May strike, doctors returned to work. Mrs. Fatima's son got treatment. But the underlying issues remain.

A nation that cannot care for the sick cannot be called developed. A doctor who cannot feed his family cannot give his best to patients.

President Tinubu's administration has promised to increase health budget to 10% of total budget by 2027. Doctors are watching.

As Dr. Orji said, "We want to heal Nigeria. But Nigeria must also heal us."

Until doctors are paid, equipped, and respected, the strike cycle will continue. And mothers like Fatima will keep crying on hospital floors.

Nigeria must choose: Invest in health now, or pay the price in lives later.



Worse, doctors are migrating. UK's GMC register shows 7,000 Nigerian doctors moved there since 2021. Saudi Arabia, US, and Canada are actively recruiting.

FEATURE

When private parties create public pain



Weekends, particularly Saturdays, are traditionally set aside for relaxation, social engagements and the celebration of loved ones, whether living or departed. Across Nigeria, Saturdays have become synonymous with weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, thanksgiving services, burials, reunions and a host of other social events that bring families and friends together. These occasions are important because they strengthen social bonds, preserve cultural values and provide opportunities for people to share in one another's joys and sorrows.

However, what ought to be a period of recreation and merriment often turns into an ordeal for many motorists and commuters in parts of Benin City and several other urban centres across Edo State. The culprit is not difficult to identify. The proliferation of event centres without adequate parking facilities has created a recurring traffic nightmare that continues to inconvenience residents, impede movement and compromise public safety.

One road that readily comes to mind is Scott Asuen Way, popularly known as Country Home Motel Road, off Sapele Road in Benin City. The road hosts several event centres, facilities that attract large gatherings almost every weekend. Like many event centres in the metropolis, the facilities serve a legitimate purpose and contribute to the local economy. They provide employment opportunities, support vendors and offer venues for important social functions.

Unfortunately, the challenge arises when the number of vehicles attending events far exceeds the available parking space. The result is often predictable. Vehicles are indiscriminately parked on both sides of the road, reducing what should ordinarily be a smooth thoroughfare into a narrow passage barely sufficient for one vehicle at a time. Motorists are forced to navigate through bottlenecks while commuters endure needless delays.

My personal experiences on the road on Saturdays were particularly unpleasant. The entire stretch leading to Crown Heights Pavilion was virtually blocked by vehicles belonging to guests attending a ceremony. What should have been a straightforward journey became a frustrating exercise in patience and endurance. The indiscriminate parking left only a tiny corridor for moving vehicles, creating confusion, delays and unnecessary stress for road users. It was one of those experiences that leaves one wondering whether any consideration had been given to members of the public who also had legitimate reasons to use the road.

Regrettably, Country Home Motel Road as it is popularly called, is one example among many. Similar scenes play out across Benin City whenever major events are held. Roads hosting event centres often become impassable due to poor parking arrangements and the absence of effective traffic management measures.

The issue raises important questions about urban planning, business

regulation and public responsibility. While event centres are private enterprises established for profit, their operations inevitably affect the public. Consequently, owners of such facilities should bear a degree of responsibility for ensuring that their activities do not constitute a nuisance to other members of society.

One of the most glaring deficiencies associated with many event centres is the lack of adequate parking facilities. Some centres are constructed on plots that are too small to accommodate the volume of guests they attract. Others prioritise the size and aesthetics of their halls while paying little attention to parking requirements. In some cases, developers seem to assume that public roads will serve as an extension of their premises.

This assumption is both irresponsible and dangerous. Roads are designed primarily for the movement of people and vehicles, not as permanent parking lots for private events. When guests occupy substantial portions of public roads with their vehicles, they effectively deprive other road users of their right to free movement. This creates congestion, increases travel times and heightens the risk of accidents.

The consequences extend beyond mere inconvenience. Traffic congestion caused by indiscriminate parking can have serious implications for emergency services. Imagine an ambulance transporting a critically ill patient or a fire service vehicle responding to an emergency being trapped in traffic created by vehicles attending a social function. The resulting delay could mean the difference between life and death.

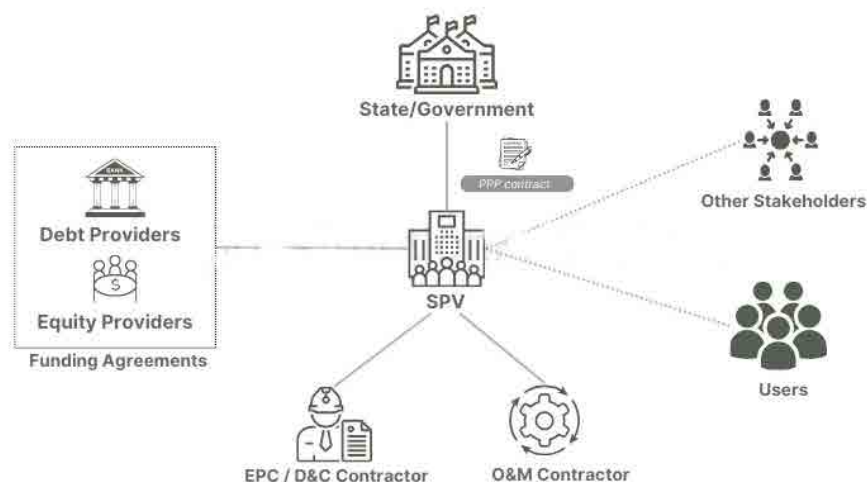
Security concerns also arise from such situations. Congested roads provide opportunities for criminal elements to exploit confusion and vulnerability. Gridlocked traffic can expose motorists to robbery, harassment and other forms of criminal activity. Furthermore, emergency evacuation during a crisis becomes considerably more difficult when roads are obstructed.

The economic cost is equally significant. Time lost in traffic translates into reduced productivity. Business owners, workers, transport operators and countless others suffer economic losses when journeys that should take a few minutes stretch into hours because roads have been converted into makeshift parking lots. The cumulative impact of such delays on the local economy may not be immediately visible, but it is nonetheless substantial.

Another concern is the inconvenience caused to residents who live in neighbourhoods where event centres are located. On weekends, many residents find themselves effectively trapped within their own communities. Visitors struggle to locate parking spaces, residents are unable to access their homes conveniently, and normal daily activities become unnecessarily complicated. The rights and comfort of those who reside in such areas should not be sacrificed on the altar of commercial interests.

The challenge is further compounded by the rapid growth of Benin City. Over the years, the city has

Public Private Partnership: What is it? How does it work?



expanded considerably, accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. More people now own private cars than was the case two decades ago. Yet the supporting infrastructure has not always kept pace with this growth. Consequently, even minor disruptions can trigger significant traffic congestion. When event centres add hundreds of parked vehicles to already busy roads, the consequences become predictable.

It is therefore imperative for government authorities to take decisive action. The Edo State Ministries of Environment and Transportation, along with relevant agencies responsible for urban planning and traffic management, should urgently address this growing menace.

One practical measure would be to enforce stricter regulations governing the establishment and operation of event centres. Approval should only be granted to facilities that meet clearly defined parking requirements. Developers seeking to establish event centres must demonstrate that they possess sufficient parking space to accommodate the expected number of guests.

Existing event centres should also be subjected to periodic assessments. Facilities that consistently contribute to traffic congestion due to inadequate parking arrangements should be compelled to provide additional parking spaces or face appropriate sanctions. Regulatory oversight should not end once a licence is issued.

“More people now own private cars than was the case two decades ago. Yet the supporting infrastructure has not always kept pace with this growth.”

Furthermore, event centre operators should be required to develop traffic management plans for large gatherings. Such plans may include the deployment of parking attendants, traffic marshals and security personnel to ensure orderly movement of vehicles. Collaboration with traffic management authorities can also help minimise disruptions during major events.

The government may also consider introducing minimum parking standards for event centres based on seating capacity. Such standards are common in many developed jurisdictions where planning authorities recognise the direct relationship between venue capacity and parking requirements. A facility designed to host one thousand guests, for example, should not be approved without adequate provision for the vehicles expected to accompany such a gathering.

Equally important is the responsibility of event attendees themselves. Many motorists knowingly park in ways that obstruct traffic, block access points and inconvenience other road users. Such behaviour demonstrates a lack of civic consciousness and consideration for others. Guests attending social functions should recognise that their convenience must not come at the expense of the wider public.

There is therefore a need for sustained public enlightenment to encourage responsible parking habits and greater respect for public spaces. Traffic management is a collective responsibility that requires cooperation from event centre operators, organisers, guests and government agencies alike.

Law enforcement agencies and traffic management officials must also be more proactive. Vehicles parked in ways that obstruct traffic should attract appropriate sanctions. Consistent enforcement of traffic regulations would serve as a deterrent and encourage greater compliance. Rules are only effective when they are enforced fairly and consistently.

The growing popularity of event centres in Edo State is a reflection of economic activity and social vibrancy. This development should be welcomed. However, growth must be accompanied by proper planning and regulation. Otherwise, what should be a source of convenience and enjoyment may become a source of frustration and disorder.

As Benin City continues its transformation into a modern urban centre, issues such as traffic management, parking infrastructure and urban planning deserve serious attention. The city cannot aspire to greater development while tolerating practices that routinely obstruct public roads and inconvenience thousands of residents.

The time has come for a comprehensive review of policies governing event centres across Edo State. Adequate parking facilities should be made a mandatory requirement rather than a desirable option. Existing operators should be encouraged and where necessary compelled to comply with established standards.

Ultimately, the objective is not to discourage celebrations or social gatherings. Nigerians are naturally sociable people who value communal interactions and collective celebrations. Weddings will continue to take place. Birthdays will continue to be celebrated. Families will continue to honour their departed loved ones. These traditions are an integral part of our cultural heritage.

What must change, however, is the notion that public roads can be freely appropriated as parking spaces for private events. Roads belong to everyone and should remain accessible to all. The right of one group to celebrate should not translate into hardship for countless other citizens attempting to go about their lawful activities.

If the relevant authorities act decisively and event centre operators embrace their responsibilities, the recurring traffic nightmare associated with many weekend celebrations can be substantially reduced. In doing so, Edo State would not only improve mobility and public safety but also enhance the quality of life for its residents.

The joyous sounds of celebration should never become the soundtrack of frustration for innocent motorists trapped in avoidable traffic congestion. A balance can and must be achieved between private celebrations and public convenience. The sooner this reality is embraced by event centre owners, government regulators and the public alike, the better for Benin City and every other town across Edo State.

• Dr. Odaro, a columnist, lectures in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

Sports

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

President FedCup 2026: Bendel Insurance FC set for round 16 clash with El-Kanemi Warriors

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

Bendel Insurance Football Club will this weekend clash with El-Kanemi Warriors of Maiduguri in the Round of 16 battle of the 2026 President Federation Cup.

The round of 16 tie is sched-

uled to hold at the FIFA Goal project field in Abuja on Saturday evening. Kickoff time is 4pm

The Benin Arsenal on Monday, June 1, 2026 defeated NNL Giant Crown FC 3-1 in the round of 32 fixture to secure qualification to the round of 16 of the 2026 President

Federation Cup tournament.

Bendel Insurance came from behind to cancel Ebeniza Odeyemi's 9th minute goal lead for Crown FC with a goal scored by Alex Oweifaleya in the 19th minute of the game.

Promise Anyanwu scored twice in the second half; 52nd minute and 89th minute to seal victory for the Benin Arsenal in Lagos.

Bendel Insurance started this year's Federation Cup campaign in the round of 64 with a 2-1 victory over Katsina Utd Junior team in the round of 64 to qualify for the round of 32. Kayode Oke scored twice; in the 60th minute and in the 86th minute to seal victory for

the 2023 Champions against in Area 3 field, Abuja.

Bendel Insurance FC won the 2023 edition of the Federation Cup after defeating Enugu Rangers 1-0 at the Stephen Keshi Stadium in Asaba on June 21, 2023 and secured Nigeria's 4th ticket for CAF Consideration tournament.

ROUND OF 16 FIXTURES

Sokoto United Vs Adamawa United

Bendel Insurance Vs El-Kanemi Warriors

Kada Warriors Vs Wikki Tourists

Bida Lions Vs Flight FC

Rivers United Vs Nasarawa United



BENDEL INSURANCE FC



SUPER EAGLES OF NIGERIA DURING POLAND FRIENDLY MATCH

FG seeks grassroots sports growth through Poland partnership

The Federal Government has reiterated its commitment to grassroots sports development as it expands cooperation with Poland through sports-related initiatives.

The assurance was given at a football viewing event organised by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Grassroots Sports Development in collaboration with the Polish Embassy in Nigeria.

The event, held at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium,

on Wednesday in Abuja, attracted sports enthusiasts, government officials and members of the diplomatic community, who gathered to watch the international friendly match between Nigeria and Poland.

The match ended 2-2 in Warsaw, with Poland scoring a stoppage-time equaliser to deny Nigeria's Super Eagles victory.

Nigeria opened scoring in the 23rd minute through Terem Moffi, who converted a cross from Moses Simon after a VAR review.

Badminton Federation of Nigeria opens applications for national coaches

The Badminton Federation of Nigeria (BFN) has announced vacancies for national coaching positions as part of efforts to reposition the sport for sustained growth and international success.

In a nationwide call for applications, the federation says it is seeking dynamic, experienced, and result-oriented coaches to drive the development of badminton across all levels and strengthen Nigeria's competitiveness on the global stage.

Available positions include Head Coach, Assistant Coach I, and Assistant Coach II for the Senior National Team, Junior National Team, and Para Badminton Team.

According to the federation, successful candidates will play critical roles in talent discovery, player development, competition preparation, and overall team management.

The coaches will be responsible for designing and implementing training programmes, improving players' technical and tactical abilities, conducting performance analysis, and preparing athletes for local and international competitions.

BFN noted that beyond technical expertise, national coaches are expected to serve as mentors, disciplinarians,

role models, and planners who will contribute to building resilience, confidence, and professionalism among athletes.

The federation also emphasized responsibilities relating to safety, ethics, administration, and coach development, including maintaining a conducive training environment, promoting sportsmanship, keeping accurate performance records, and supporting the growth of upcoming coaches.



NNL: Sunshine Stars begin open screening ahead of 2026/27 NNL season

Sunshine Stars FC of Akure have commenced an open screening exercise for new players ahead of the 2026/27 Nigeria National League (NNL) season.

The Ondo State Football Agency (ODSFA) announced

the exercise as part of efforts to strengthen the squad and discover talented players capable of representing the club in the upcoming campaign.

According to the agency, the screening programme is open to talented footballers seeking

an opportunity to earn a place in the Sunshine Stars team as preparations intensify for the new season.

The exercise is expected to attract a large number of aspiring players from across the country, with club officials and technical crew set to assess participants based on their skills, fitness, and overall performance.

Sunshine Stars, one of Nigeria's most notable football clubs, will be aiming for a strong outing in the 2026/27 NNL season and view the screening exercise as a key step in identifying quality talents who can contribute to the team's objectives.



SUNSHINE STARS PLAYERS IN TRAINING

Organisers conclude arrangements for Gombe Emir's Cup 2026

The Organising Committee of the Gombe Emir's Cup 2026 says it has concluded arrangements for the successful staging of the grassroots football tournament scheduled to begin on June 13.

The tournament will kick off with an opening ceremony at Pantami Stadium, Gombe, at 3 p.m.

The annual competition,

which features teams representing Emirates and Chiefdoms across the state, is aimed at promoting unity, youth development and sporting excellence through football and community engagement.

Speaking ahead of the tournament, the sponsor and former Chairman of the Gombe State Football Association, Ahmed Gara-Gombe, said the compe-

tition had become an important platform for talent discovery and youth empowerment.

He said the tournament also served as a vehicle for promoting friendship, peaceful coexistence and stronger relationships among communities in the state.

"We are committed to providing opportunities for young footballers to showcase

their abilities and pursue their dreams in the game.

"The tournament represents more than football; it is a platform for unity, discipline and community development.

"The Gombe Emir's Cup continues to bring our people together and strengthen the bonds that unite us as one state," he said.

International Friendly: Bassey blames late arrivals for Poland draw

Super Eagles defender Calvin Bassey has attributed Nigeria's 2-2 draw against Poland in Wednesday's international friendly in Warsaw to the late arrival of several players to camp.

The Nigeria international, who plays for Fulham FC, was among the players introduced in the second half after joining the team's camp on Monday.

The Super Eagles appeared on course for victory after taking a 2-1 lead, but a stoppage-time strike from Poland denied Nigeria the win and ensured the game ended in a draw.

Reacting after the match, Bas-

sey admitted that the team was disappointed not to secure victory but noted that the short preparation time affected the squad's cohesion.

"We should have got the win. Conceding two late goals in both halves shows there are things we must adjust," Bassey said.

"A lot of us had different arrival times, and a few only joined the camp yesterday, so it was good to just get some minutes in the legs."

The defender, however, expressed confidence that the team would improve as the players spend more time together ahead of future assignments.



CALVIN BASSEY AND ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI

Can NPFL clubs make an impact on the continent this time around?

TOLULOPE OGUNTIMEHIN

The 2025/26 Nigeria Premier Football League season will be remembered as one of the most competitive in recent history. From the title race to the relegation battle, uncertainty remained until the final week of the campaign, leaving fans captivated throughout the season.

With Rangers International, Rivers United and Shooting Stars set to represent Nigeria on the continent, attention has once again shifted to a familiar question: can Nigerian clubs finally restore the country's status in continent of African club football?

The challenge is significant.

The last Nigerian club to reach the semi-finals of the CAF Champions League was Sunshine Stars in 2012. Ironically, the Akure-based club now competes in the Nigeria National League. Since then, Nigerian clubs have struggled to make meaningful progress in continental competitions.

The CAF Confederation Cup has offered little relief. Rivers United's run to the quarter-finals in 2024 remains one of the few bright spots in recent years.

Many reasons have been advanced for the decline. Remo Stars proprietor, Kunle Soname, once noted that Nigerian clubs cannot compete financially with their counterparts in North Africa and South Africa, where player remuneration and welfare packages are significantly better.

While financial limitations are real, they do not tell the whole story.

Clubs from Ghana, Senegal, DR Congo, and other African nations have consistently performed well on the continent despite facing challenges that are not entirely different from those confronting Nigerian clubs. Therefore, improving remuneration alone will not automatically translate into continental success.

If Nigerian clubs are to compete effectively, several practical measures must be taken.

EARLY ACCESS TO CAF-APPROVED EQUIPMENT:

One recurring complaint from Nigerian clubs is the late arrival of CAF-approved match balls and equipment. The Nigeria Football Federation and participating clubs must work together to ensure that such materials are received early enough for players to train with them before continental competitions commence.

At the highest level, even small details matter. Familiarity with match equipment can make a difference.

EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT AND SQUAD BUILDING:

Successful continental campaigns often begin long before the first match is played.

Clubs must strengthen their scouting networks and identify key targets early. Areas of weakness should be addressed immediately after the domestic season ends, allowing new signings sufficient time to settle into the team.

North African clubs excel in this area, often concluding their recruit-



ENUGU RANGERS INTERNATIONAL



ment plans before pre-season begins.

FASTER PLAYER REGISTRATION AND CLEARANCE:

One challenge Nigerian clubs frequently encounter is the delayed clearance of newly signed players.

The NPFL and football authorities should serve as facilitators to ensure that transfers and registrations are completed promptly. Early clearance enables players to participate fully in pre-season preparations and tactical sessions.

STRONG FINANCIAL BACKING:

Continental football requires significant investment.

Historically, Nigerian clubs have performed best when there was strong institutional support from state governments and club management. Enyimba's back-to-back CAF Champions League triumphs in 2003 and 2004 were backed by deliberate financial commitment and administrative stability.

For clubs owned by state governments, timely funding is essential. Continental football cannot be approached as an afterthought.

BEGIN PREPARATIONS IMMEDIATELY:

One major weakness of Nigerian clubs has been late preparation.

Rather than waiting until weeks before the competition, clubs should begin building their squads now. Early preparation allows coaches to integrate new players, develop tactical cohesion and improve team chemistry.

Successful African clubs spend months preparing for continental campaigns.

QUALITY FRIENDLY MATCHES:

Preparation should include competitive friendly matches against strong opposition.

Exposure to teams with different tactical approaches helps players adapt to the demands of continental football. Enyimba's international

friendlies before their historic CAF Champions League successes remain a useful example of the benefits of high-level preparation.

Where possible, clubs should seek opportunities to play opponents from outside Nigeria.

ENGAGEMENT WITH FIFA-ACCREDITED REFEREES:

African competitions are often decided by small margins, and players must understand how matches are managed under international officiating standards.

Regular interactions with FIFA-accredited referees during pre-season can help players better understand the Laws of the Game, disciplinary expectations and match management.

Such knowledge can prevent costly mistakes during crucial matches.

THE ROAD AHEAD:

The talent exists. The passion exists. The fan support exists.

What has been missing in recent years is the level of planning, investment and professionalism required to compete with Africa's elite clubs.

Rangers International, Rivers United and Shooting Stars have an opportunity to change the narrative. However, success will not come through hope alone. It will require preparation, financial commitment, strategic recruitment and strong administrative support.

If these elements are put in place, Nigerian clubs can once again become genuine contenders on the African stage rather than mere participants.

The question is no longer whether Nigerian clubs have the talent to succeed. The real question is whether they are willing to prepare adequately for the challenge ahead.



NBBF President unveils Comprehensive National U18 Basketball Programme

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The President of the Nigeria Basketball Federation, Engr. Ahmadu Musa Kida, has reaffirmed the federation's commitment to youth



ENGR. AHMADU MUSA KIDA

development in the country through basketball game.

Kida made the promise when he unveiled a comprehensive preparation schedule programme for Nigeria's U18 Boys' and Girls' National

Teams ahead of the 2026 FIBA U18 Africa Championships.

The programme, released by the federation on yesterday, outlines a structured pathway designed to identify, nurture, and prepare the country's most promising young basketball talents from both Nigeria and the diaspora for continental competition.

According to the programme approved by the federation, the preparation process will commence with simultaneous national tryouts in Benin City, Lagos, and Abuja on June 6 and 7, 2026. The exercise is expected to attract talented young players from across the country, providing them with

an opportunity to earn selection into the national team programme.

Following the tryouts, the U18 Boys' National Team will enter a local preparation camp from June 19 to July 2, ahead of the FIBA U18 Zone 3 Qualifiers scheduled to hold in Burkina Faso from July 4 to 12, 2026. The team that will represent Nigeria at the zonal qualifiers will comprise exclusively locally based players.

As preparations intensify for the continental championship, selected players from both the boys' and girls' programmes will participate in a local training camp from July 19 to 27, aimed at refining skills, enhancing fitness levels, and improving team cohesion.



Poland holds Nigeria to 2-2 draw in Warsaw

The Super Eagles of Nigeria were held to a 2-2 draw by the Polish national team in their international friendly game on Wednesday in Warsaw, Poland.

The Super Eagles drew the first blood as FC Porto striker, Terem Mofi finished off a brilliant pass from Moses Simon in the 23rd minute of the game.

Nigeria dominated but failed to defend a corner kick, allowing Nicola Zalewski's strike past goalkeeper Maduka Okoye to re-

store parity just before halftime.

Coach Eric chelle made seven changes in the second half, introducing Calvin Bassey, Zaidu Sanusi, Semi Ajayi, Rafiu Durosinmi, Raphael Onyedika, Paul Onuachu and Philip Otele in the 46th minute.

The changes didn't do much in terms of ball possession, but the Eagles took the lead again in the 77th minute. Paul Onuachu made no mistake in converting a penalty after a polish player handled the ball in the box, resulting in a spot kick.

Nigeria-Poland friendly: Stakeholders laud sports diplomacy, investment potential of Nigerian football

Stakeholders in the Nigeria's football sector have commended the Federal Government's efforts at leveraging sports diplomacy to strengthen international relations and promote youth development in the country.

They spoke on the sidelines of a football viewing party organised by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the President on Grassroots Sports Development in collaboration with the Polish Embassy in Nigeria at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, on Wednesday in Abuja.

The event, which attracted football enthusiasts, government officials and members of the diplomatic community, was organised to watch the international friendly match between Nigeria and Poland.

The Super Eagles were held to a 2-2 draw by Poland after conceding a stoppage-time equaliser in Warsaw.

Speaking at the event, former First Vice President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Seyi Akinwumi, commended the organisers for cre-

ating a platform that brought together football lovers and key stakeholders.

"I must commend the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Grassroots Sports Development for this initiative.

"The turnout was impressive, with football enthusiasts and dignitaries coming together to enjoy the game in a unique atmosphere," he said.



NIGERIA VS POLAND FRIENDLY

Aba football enthusiasts seek more Grade A friendlies for Super Eagles

Some football enthusiasts in Aba have called on the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and Super Eagles Head Coach, Eric Chelle, to arrange

more high-profile international friendlies for the national team.

The enthusiasts made the call in separate interviews with the News Agency of Nigeria

(NAN) yesterday while reacting to the Super Eagles' 2-2 draw with Poland on Tuesday.

The Super Eagles twice took the lead in the friendly encounter but were pegged back on both occasions by the Polish side.

One of the respondents, James Obiukwu, said the Super Eagles would have secured victory but for the late goals conceded due to lapses in concentration.

"In spite of an impressive overall performance, both goals conceded highlighted a recurring weakness in the national team.



NIGERIA VS POLAND FRIENDLY

NSC DG Olopade leads NIG delegation to Sanwo-Olu as Lagos inaugurates LOC

The Director-General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, on Wednesday led members of the Main Organising Committee (MOC) of the 2026 National Intermediate Games (NIG) on a courtesy visit to Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, as preparations gather momentum for

the maiden edition of the championship scheduled for October.

The high-level visit, held at Lagos House, Marina, formed part of a three-day inspection and consultative tour by the NSC and the MOC to assess facilities and strengthen collaboration with the Lagos State Government ahead of the Games. The delegation inspected key sporting ven-

ues, athlete accommodation centres and support infrastructure earmarked for the competition.

During the visit, Governor Sanwo-Olu officially inaugurated the Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the inaugural National Intermediate Games, charging members to approach their assignment with dedication, professionalism and a

commitment to excellence.

Describing the Games as a strategic investment in Nigeria's future, the governor said the competition would serve as a platform for discovering and nurturing young talents while promoting national unity, social inclusion and cultural integration among youths from across the country.

Ekiti United Head Coach Bolarinwa Idris resigns

The Head Coach of Ekiti United FC, Bolarinwa Idris has resigned following the conclusion of the 2025/2026 Nigeria National League (NNL) season.

The highly respected coach submitted his resignation letter to the club's secretary, Bolu Idowu on Wednesday in Ado-Ekiti.

Under Idris, Ekiti United finished third in the fiercely contested NNL season, narrowly missing out on promotion but earned widespread admiration for their consistency, discipline, and strong performance.

One of the standout achievements of his tenure was the club's flawless home record.

He became the only coach in

the just concluded NNL season to maintain 100 per cent home record, winning all nine home matches and securing the maximum points available on home soil.

His achievement underlined his tactical intelligence and ability to build a formidable team.

Idris in his resignation letter, expressed deep appreciation to the Ekiti State Government for the opportunity provided to him to serve and contribute to the development of football in the state.

He also paid tribute to the Technical Adviser to the Governor on Sports Development, Olusola Osetoba, for her unwavering support and commitment throughout the season.



BOLARINWA IDRIS