

Oriire Abduction: Makinde meets victims' families, reassures safe rescue of all

IBADAN
Governor Seyi Makinde on Saturday night met with families of the Oriire abductees, urging calm and cooperation as security agencies intensify efforts to secure their release.

The meeting, held at Ahoro-Esiele community, brought together relatives of the victims, community leaders, and residents. Makinde said he understood that mere words could not take away their pains, but assured that his administration was

working around the clock to bring everyone home safely. "Since this incident occurred, I've been holding security meetings twice daily and working directly with security agencies. "We will push beyond every limit until all abductees are rescued," he assured.

He described the abductors' actions as "cruel, unacceptable, and inhumane," regardless of any grievances they claim to have. Makinde also paid tributes to the sacrifices of security personnel, noting that nearly 200 Amotekun operatives had died fighting crime across Oyo State

since the corps was formed. A relative of the victims, Prof. Wole Alamu, pleaded with the governor to do everything possible to free the abductees. Another victim's relative, Mr Aliu Saidi, made a similar plea. After addressing the larger crowd, Makinde held a closed-

door meeting with parents and relatives of the abducted pupils and teachers to share updates on the rescue operations. The abduction has heightened security concerns in the area, with residents demanding faster action to end kidnapping along the state's borders.

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That The People May Know

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Socio-economic interventions: We are working hard to ensure safe, conducive state —Okpebholo

● **Says govt targets good and motorable roads** ● **Working to end cultism** ● **Traders, farmers, others react**

ANDY ASEMOTA AND RICHARD EWEKA
BENIN CITY
With contractors handling Ramat Park Flyover Bridge project and other infrastructural works set to deliver the projects at advanced stages of completion, Edo State Government, Senator Monday Okpebholo, said yesterday that the government will commence work on

Mechanic and Peanuts Roads. Speaking at the Rock of Ages Christian Assembly and the Living Faith Church International, otherwise known as the Winners Chapel, both on Sapele Road, Benin City, Gov Okpebholo said his administration is working hard to ensure that the state is safe and conducive for its citizens and non-citizens alike. He said his administration is doing its best to make life better for Edo people, adding that

the government will continue to ensure the people enjoy the dividends of democracy under his watch. He noted that officials of the Ministry of works will evaluate the road and commence work to ensure Edo people enjoy good and motorable roads across the State. The Governor disclosed this while addressing worshippers at the Rock of Ages Christian Assembly and Winners Chapel

both on Sapele Road Benin City. Gov Okpebholo said his administration was working hard to ensure that Edo State is safe and conducive for citizens and none citizens alike as cultism has been fought to a standstill. "Today we are no longer afraid of cultism in the State as our administration is working hard to put an end to cultism in the state. God is using us to change the story of Edo state". He thanked pastor Charles

Osazuwa for his prayers; noting that his prophecy came to pass as he won the governorship election to become governor of Edo state. "I thank the man of God, anytime I step here, I see the spirit of God and the demonstration of his power. I came here to tell you about my ambition to contest for the Governorship seat, you said I should go ahead that I will win the election. "Nobody believed I would win the election, but I won and the State is benefiting from my leadership as I am developing

the State to the benefits of Edo people" Responding to the request of Pastor Charles Osazuwa on declaring a day of thanksgiving for the State, Gov Okpebholo said Edo state is a Christian State and God has been faithful to the State, noting that his request has been granted. "Edo State is a Christian State and what you have requested is granted but instead of one day, we will declare a three day thanksgiving and

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SIGNATURE INFRASTRUCTURE: The nearly completed Ramat Park flyover bridge constructed by the Governor Monday Okpebholo administration to transform transport and commercial activities in Benin metropolis.

Beneficiaries hail Gov Okpebholo over N1bn interest-free loan impact

● **Laud business growth**

RICHARD EWEKA
BENIN CITY
Beneficiaries of the N1 billion interest-free loan scheme, including traders, farmers and artisans across Edo State, have continued to hail Governor Monday Okpebholo for what they described as a life-changing economic intervention that has boosted small and medium-scale businesses and improved livelihoods across the state. This was revealed during the monitoring tour across the state embarked upon by officials of the Edo State Skills Development Agency (ESSDA), alongside participating financial institutions responsible for disbursing the

loans, aimed to assess the impact and success rate of the scheme among beneficiaries. Chairman of the Igbo Market Traders Association in Edo State, Comrade Jonathan Okoye, praised the governor for what he described as a business-friendly intervention that has helped traders expand their businesses. He appealed for an increase in the second batch of the loan to enable more traders benefit from the scheme, adding that members of the association were committed to prompt repayment to sustain the initiative. At Oba Market in Benin City, trader, Judith Oshodin expressed appreciation to the government responsible for disbursing the

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Super Eagles humble Jamaican national team to win fourth Unity Cup —Pg 11

Residents, traders, transporters commend Gov Okpebholo over giant strides

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Residents, traders, transport operators, motorists and scout groups around the Ramat Park axis of Benin City have commended Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, over the near completion of the Ramat Park Flyover Bridge, describing the project as a landmark infrastructural intervention set to transform transporta-

tion and commercial activities within the state capital.

The commendations come as construction work on the flyover reaches an advanced stage, with the project nearing completion ahead of public use. The Ramat Park Flyover, one of the signature infrastructure projects of the Okpebholo administration, is expected to significantly ease traffic congestion and improve vehicular movement along the ever-busy Ikpoba Hill-Ramat Park corridor.

Speaking on behalf of scouts during an excursion to the project site, Scout Leader, Pastor William Iseghale, described the project as a reflection of purposeful leadership and strategic governance aimed at addressing long-standing transportation challenges in Edo State. He noted that beyond improving traffic flow, the flyover would also enhance road safety for motorists and pedestrians while projecting a more modern outlook for Benin City.

According to him, the pro-

ject represents more than just physical infrastructure, as it symbolises progress, urban renewal and responsive governance tailored towards improving the daily experiences of residents and commuters.

Several scouts also expressed appreciation to Governor Okpebholo for the project, noting that the near-completed flyover had provided many of them with their first experience of standing on a flyover bridge, describing the moment as both memorable and inspiring.

Traders operating around the Ramat Park corridor and adjoining markets equally applauded the pace and quality of work on the project. One trader, Blessing Bliss, said although construction activities initially created temporary inconveniences, the long-term economic and commercial benefits of the project would far outweigh the early challenges.

Commercial drivers and transport operators also described the flyover as a major relief from years of persistent

traffic gridlock along the route, expressing optimism that the project would drastically reduce travel time and improve transportation efficiency within the metropolis.

Residents in the area further praised Governor Okpebholo for prioritising infrastructure development, noting that the project has already transformed the physical outlook of the environment and restored public confidence in government-driven urban renewal initiatives.

Socio-economic interventions: We are...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

praise event for Jesus Christ.

"You voted for me because you want Edo state to be developed. Peanut and Mechanic roads to the by-pass will be constructed. Consider the road done".

Delivering his sermon titled "The Force Of Expectation" Pastor Charles Osazuwa said citizens should trust God Almighty and believe in Nigeria to come out from the challenges and problems facing the na-

tion.

Reading from Jer.20:11; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 18:14, Osazuwa said he believes in Nigeria, believed in God; stating that Nigeria would soon overcome its current challenges.

Pastor Osazuwa appealed to Governor Okpebholo to fix the mechanic and peanut road which is a strategic route to decongest the traffic gridlock in Sapele Road.

The governor also worshipped at Winners Chapter Church in Sapele road.

Beneficiaries hail Gov Okpebholo...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

error, saying the loan had significantly improved her business.

"We are grateful to Governor Okpebholo because the loan has really helped our businesses. We are even repaying before the stipulated time, but we also appeal to the governor to consider grants in the next phase," she said.

Beneficiaries within the Arewa community in Benin City also commended the governor for ensuring inclusiveness and fairness in the distribution process.

Leader of the Arewa Community at Wire Road, Lagos Street and Iwehen, Isah Shaibu, described the scheme as unprecedented.

"The money has improved our businesses and increased sales because it came without interest. I have been involved in politics for over thirty years, and I have never seen a government give out loans without interest," he said.

In Edo Central, beneficiaries in Eguare-Ekpoma and Irrua also praised the governor for the initiative.

One of the beneficiaries, Ruth Odiase from Eguare-Ekpoma in Esan West, said the intervention had renewed confidence among traders and women in the state.

"We are thanking our governor, Akpakomiza, for remembering the women. He has come to rescue traders and small business owners," she said.

However, some traders in Irrua appealed to the government for understanding over delays in repayment, blaming the destruction of shops and business disruptions caused by ongoing road reconstruction around the Irrua Onojie Palace Road.

One of the affected traders, Theophilus Orhiwabor, said

part of his business structure was demolished during the road project, affecting his ability to repay the loan.

"I appreciate the government for the N200,000 loan I received and invested in my business. Unfortunately, part of my caravan was destroyed during the road construction, and this affected my business and repayment plan," he explained.

In Edo North, traders at the popular Jattu Market in Etsako West and Igarra Market in Akoko-Edo also expressed joy and appreciation to Governor Okpebholo for what they described as a timely intervention that has strengthened businesses and improved livelihoods across the region.

Speaking during the tour, the Edo State Commissioner for Finance, Engr. Emmanuel Okoebor, said Governor Okpebholo was motivated to introduce the scheme because of his understanding that the real economy thrives in the markets.

"The actual economy lives in our markets, shops and in the daily hustle of our hardworking traders. Many of them have been seriously affected by the high cost of accessing loans, and the government decided it was necessary to support traders and small business owners," he said.

According to him, the government deliberately designed the loans to be interest-free in order to reduce the burden on market women and other small-scale entrepreneurs.

"Before now, some traders paid as much as five percent monthly interest on loans. For a N200,000 loan, they paid about N10,000 monthly as interest alone. Governor Okpebholo decided to remove that burden

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PUBLIC HEARING:

A cross section of relevant stakeholders in a public hearing on desirability or otherwise of routing Ying Zhi Egergy gas pipeline through Orrior community in Uhumwode Loyal Government Area, organised by Edo State Geographical Information Service (EdoGIS), on Friday.

Illicit lithium mining: 15 Chinese Nationals, 9 Nigerians Face Trial In FHC

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja at the weekend commenced the trial of 24 Chinese nationals and Nigerians accused of illegal mining of Nigeria's critical mineral resource, lithium, in Nasarawa State.

The court heard that the suspects were illegally mining lithium in Kokona Local Gov-

ernment Area of Nasarawa, on May 16, 2026, contrary to section 1(8)(b) of the Miscellaneous Offences Act.

The suspects docked before Justice Offili-Ajumogobia, were reportedly apprehended within a mineral title area legally assigned to TIMADIX Geomin Consult Ltd under Exploration Licence No 036528-EL.

The charge, marked FHC/ABJ/CP.281/2026, indicates

the defendants face a provision that prescribes stiff penalties, including life imprisonment upon conviction.

At the start of the proceedings, defence counsel, Prof. M. T. Adekilekun (SAN), who applied for bail of the suspects, assured the court that the defendants would be available for trial.

Justice Ofili-Ajumogobia consequently granted the bail request and ordered the accused persons to be released to their counsel without mon-

etary conditions as they were directed to deposit their international passports and national identity documents with the court registrar.

In his reaction following the hearing, lead prosecution counsel to Mining Marshals, Mr. Ojo Toluwa Alex, stated the bail was granted at the discretion of the court, while expressing concern over the possibility of the defendants absconding, given the cross-border dimension of the case.

Orior community elders endorse gas pipeline routing at public hearing

BENIN CITY

A public hearing to deliberate on the desirability or otherwise of routing the Ying Zhi Energy Gas Pipeline through Orior Community in Uhumwode local Government Area of Edo State has received the full backing and endorsement of the Odionwere and members of the Community.

The public hearing organised by Edo State Geographic Information Service (EDOGIS) on Friday, to clear issues of compensation and Corporate Social Responsibility, brought together relevant stakeholders and was presided over by the EDOGIS Managing Director, Dr. Innocent Bello.

The event had in attendance,

representatives from the Nigerian Mainstream and Downstream Petroleum Limited, officials of Ying Zhi Energy Limited, and Community leaders from Orior, including some traditional chiefs, who converged to ensure full compliance with the enabling regulations, in the spirit of inclusiveness regarding the Chinese Company's pipeline project.

The gas pipeline stretches approximately 2.85 kilometers, running from the Orio 7 unit through the Orior Community along the Lagos - Benin Expressway, terminating at the Yinghua Energy Park in Benin City, Edo State.

In his remarks, Dr. Bello described the project as "a sustainable development initiative designed to boost domestic gas

utilisation and establish an industrial corridor powered by gas energy."

"This project will be of great economic benefit to Edo State and indeed to Nigeria at large, as the pipeline aligns with the Federal government's Nigerian Domestic Gas Utilisation Plan and Decade of Gas initiative", he said.

He emphasised the interest of Governor Monday Okpebholo in people-driven development initiatives and his push for ease of doing business in Edo State.

On their part, representatives of the gas company at the hearing, disclosed that extensive community engagement had been conducted prior to the public hearing, adding that farmers and landowners along the pipeline's right-of-way had been compensated,

while community members had been engaged in non-technical roles, including infrastructure, security management.

"Plans for skills training and local employment in technical roles are also underway," the representatives said.

The public hearing was convened specifically to provide a veritable platform for all stakeholders to ventilate and offer their varying perspectives, endorsements, or objections, if any, regarding the pipeline routing process.

Earlier, desk officer for the public hearing and staff of the Lands Department of EDOGIS, who coordinated proceedings, said the gathering was aimed at ensuring inclusiveness and transparency in the project's execution process.

NEWS

Suspected criminals wreak havoc in Okpella community

OKPELLA

Concerned stakeholders of Ukhomunyio Community in Okpella, Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State, have appealed to the Edo State Government and security agencies to urgently address the worsening security situation in the area following recent incidents of killings, kidnappings, and violent attacks.

In a statement jointly issued

on Thursday by Sam S.O. Afemikhe, Dr. Henry Idogun, Roland Ediaawe, Kasimu Sunday, Mark Adogah, Omoreige Usman, Prince Haruna Ahmed, Friday Ododeh, and Dr. Victor Balogun, the stakeholders lamented what they described as a disturbing rise in insecurity that has disrupted the once peaceful atmosphere of the community.

The group alleged that within the last few weeks, two residents, Andrew Ilabeshi of Kal-

aba Village and Engr. Ichaba Dennis of Imioko Village, were attacked and killed in their homes by suspected gunmen. Their children, according to the statement, were abducted and later released after ransom payments were made.

The stakeholders condemned the incidents, describing them as barbaric and completely alien to the long-standing peaceful tradition of Ukhomunyio Community.

They warned that if urgent steps were not taken to restore peace and security, the situation could negatively affect major industries operating within the area, including BUA Cement and Dangote Industries.

The statement also expressed concern over violence that reportedly occurred during the annual Olimi Festival celebration last weekend, alleging that some youths unlawfully used firearms during the event.

According to the stakeholders, the violence led to the death of one Aliu Dickson from Imirekhe, who was reportedly shot dead in the early hours of April 16, 2026, while several others sustained gunshot injuries and are receiving treatment in various hospitals.

The group described the development as unfortunate, noting that the Olimi Festival had always symbolized peace, unity, and cultural heritage among the people of Ukhomunyio and the larger Okpella community.

While sympathizing with families of the victims, the stakeholders also raised concerns over what they termed indiscriminate arrests and detention of youths from Imioko Village, warning that such actions could further escalate tensions within the community.

They called on the Edo State Government and security

agencies to strengthen security presence in the area, conduct impartial investigations into the killings and kidnappings, ensure fairness in arrests and investigations, and prevent any breakdown of law and order.

The stakeholders further urged indigenes of Ukhomunyio Community at home and abroad to unite in the collective effort to restore peace and security.

As part of efforts to support investigations, the group announced a reward of N1 million for credible information leading to the arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the recent killings and kidnappings in the community.

Another N1 million reward was also announced for information leading to the arrest of persons responsible for the violence and shootings recorded during the recent Olimi Festival celebration.

**LANDMARK PROJECT:**

A section of Ramat Park flyover bridge at advanced stage of completion at the weekend.

NAHCON commends Edo over exceptional coordination in Mina

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) has commended the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board and the Edo State Amirul Hajj, HRH Mallam Ali D. Suleyman, the Oghieaga of Ivbie, for the effective coordination and constructive engagement demonstrated during the ongoing 2026 Hajj exercise in Saudi Arabia.

The commendation came during a visit by a NAHCON delegation to Edo pilgrims in Mina, where the delegation met with the Amirul Hajj alongside the Chairman of Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, and the Executive Secretary, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar.

Speaking during the visit, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NAHCON, Ambassador Abba Yusuf, who was represented by the Commissioner for Policy, Personnel and Finance, Prince Aliu Abdulrazak, praised Edo State for its mature and

constructive approach in addressing challenges encountered during the pilgrimage.

According to him, rather than resorting to protests or unnecessary confrontations, Edo officials adopted dialogue and constructive engagement by escalating issues appropriately to NAHCON for prompt intervention.

He said, "We want to sincerely thank the Chairman of Edo State Pilgrims Welfare Board for his relentless effort in ensuring that Edo State pilgrims are properly coordinated."

"The Governor of Edo State again selected an Amirul Hajj who is very experienced in Hajj activities, and looking at those things put together, we are not expecting anything less. We can even go and sleep believing that Edo State pilgrims are in safe hands."

Prince Abdulrazak further commended the Amirul Hajj, the board chairman, and the executive secretary for maintaining constant communication with NAHCON despite the challenges experienced in some areas of the pilgrimage operations.

Africa's \$4trn savings must work for its development priorities —AfDB

The President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Sidi Ould Tah, says Africa must mobilise its estimated four trillion dollars in domestic savings to finance the continent's development priorities.

Ould Tah spoke during a news conference at the end of the 2026 AfDB Annual Meetings in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.

The AfDB meetings started on May 25 and ended on May 29.

He described as major paradox that Africa faced an annual development financing gap of about 400 billion dollars in spite of holding vast financial resources.

"One of Africa's greatest paradoxes is that while the con-

continent faces a huge financing gap, it also possesses roughly four trillion dollars in savings that are not invested in development," he said.

According to Ould Tah, regulatory barriers and investor concerns over risk continue to limit investments in African projects.

He highlighted that many pension funds and institutional investors remained cautious because of their obligations to protect contributors' savings.

To address this challenge, Tah said the bank was developing risk-mitigation instruments to encourage long-term investment in African economies.

He cited the African Trade and Development Fund (ATDF) as one of the mecha-

nisms designed to reduce investment risks and attract institutional capital.

Tah said the AfDB recently increased its participation in the fund's capital to strengthen investor confidence and attract additional partners.

He said mobilising African capital was critical to reduce dependence on external financing and achieve economic sovereignty.

The AfDB helmsman said Africa possessed enormous natural wealth and demographic potential that must be transformed into prosperity.

Tah said the continent accounted for about 18 per cent of the world's population and held more than 30 per cent of global mineral resources.

He, however, said Africa's

contribution to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), remained disproportionately low.

"We cannot continue exporting raw materials and importing finished products while expecting different results," he said.

Tah stressed the need for large-scale investments capable of supporting industrialisation, job creation and economic transformation.

He said the Board of the bank had approved the presidency's roadmap for implementing its four strategic priorities and the new African Financial Architecture.

The AfDB president said the decisions taken at the Brazzaville meetings reflected a stronger commitment to African-led development financing.

BIPC targets 50% Benue beverage market

MAKURDI

The Benue Investment and Property Company (BIPC) plans to capture at least 50 per cent of Benue's beverage market.

BIPC Group Managing Director, Dr Raymond Asemakaha, gave the indication at the UEFA Champions League final

viewing event organised by the company for football lovers in Makurdi.

Asemakaha said that the Benue beer market alone was estimated at about 1.2 billion bottles annually.

He stated that the event was part of efforts to introduce the company's products to the people of Benue and strengthen its pres-

ence in the beverage industry.

According to him, BIPC is positioning itself to reclaim its rightful place in the market through the production of quality local brands.

He identified the company's beverage products as Zeva Beer, Oyi Bitters and Zeva Malt, describing them as products capable of competing fa-

vourably in the industry.

The BIPC boss urged residents of the state to support indigenous brands by embracing the company's products.

"If you are thinking of drinking beer, think of Zeva first.

"Every Naira spent on our products remains within the state and contributes directly to the local economy.

Beneficiaries hail Gov Okpebholo...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 2

completely," Okoebor added.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of EdoJobs, Hon. Kerimu Shehu Kelly, said the initiative was aimed at strengthening the state's SME sector and improving the economic wellbeing of traders and artisans.

He explained that EdoJobs served as the implementing agency responsible for sourcing beneficiaries and coordinating with Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs) that handled the disbursement process.

"EDOJOB has put all modalities in place for sourcing beneficiaries. We forward verified beneficiaries to the PFIs for

profiling, while the committee oversees the administration of the loan scheme," he stated.

Markets visited in Edo South Senatorial District during the monitoring tour included Agbado Market, Ogiso New Market, Santana Market, Aduwawa Market, Edaiken Market, Air Force Mummy Market, as well as the Arewa communities at Wire Road, Lagos Street and Iwehen in Benin City.

In Edo Central Senatorial District, the team visited Eguare-Ekpoma, Irrua and other markets within Esan Central and Esan West Local Government Areas, while in Edo North, Jattu Market in Etsako West and Igarra Market in Akoko-Edo were also visited.

Tinubu Commissions Reproductive Centre to raise fertility

BAUCHI

President Bola Tinubu has commissioned a state-of-the-art Infertility and Assisted Reproductive Technology Centre at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital (ATBUTH), Bauchi, to improve reproductive healthcare services and addressing infertility challenges in Nigeria.

In this way, the government hopes to expand access to specialized healthcare services.

Announcing this at the commissioning ceremony, President Tinubu, who was represented by the Chief Medical Director of ATBUTH, Prof. Yusuf Bara Jibrin, described the facility as a major milestone in Nigeria's quest for advanced medical innovation and improved fertility treatment.

He explained that in the centre equipped with cutting-edge technology, including a Computer-Assisted Semen Analysis (CASA) system that uses automated imaging and specialized software to assess sperm concentration, motility and morphology within minutes, errors associated with manual analysis will significantly reduced.

He added that the facility also features an Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) workstation, which enables fertility specialists to inject a

single sperm directly into an egg in cases of severe male infertility, thereby improving fertilisation success rates.

Tinubu further disclosed that the centre supports embryo screening for genetic conditions such as sickle cell disease, helping prospective parents achieve healthier pregnancies and better family outcomes.

He noted that the establishment of the facility demonstrates the Federal Government's commitment to expanding access to specialized healthcare services and reducing the need for Nigerians to seek advanced fertility treatment abroad.

Earlier in his remarks, the Bauchi State Commissioner for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Sani Mohammed Dambam, commended the Federal Government and the management of ATBUTH for establishing the centre.

He described the facility as a significant boost to healthcare delivery in Bauchi State and the country at large, expressing optimism that it would improve access to quality reproductive healthcare services.

Also speaking, the Director of the Infertility and Assisted Reproductive Technology Centre, Prof. Sa'idu Kadas, described infertility as a growing public health concern, revealing that six out of every 10 patients attending the hospital's

gynaecology clinic present infertility-related challenges.

He said the centre offers renewed hope to couples struggling with infertility, noting that many families who previously had limited options can now access advanced fertility solutions closer to home.

"The centre will provide specialized reproductive healthcare services and reduce the burden on patients who previously had to travel long distances in search of treatment," he said.

In his goodwill message, the Chairman of the Bauchi State

Primary Health Care Development Board, Dr. Rilwanu Mohammed, noted that before the establishment of the facility, many patients from Northern Nigeria travelled to Abuja and even outside the country for fertility treatment, often at considerable financial and

emotional cost. Geographic Reference

He expressed confidence that the new centre would not only improve access to treatment but also strengthen Nigeria's capacity in reproductive medicine and assisted reproductive technology.



ROUTINE INSPECTION TOUR:

Enthusiastic traders of the rebuilt Oba Market, Benin City, cheer Gov Monday Okpebholo, during a routine inspection tour of the project.

Police arraign man, 41, over alleged N1.1m fraud

ADO-EKITI

A 41-year-old man, Gbadura Temitope, has appeared before an Ado-Ekiti Magistrates' Court over alleged N1.1 million fraud.

The defendant, of no fixed address, is standing trial on a two-count charge of fraud and conversion of fund.

The prosecutor, Insp Olu-bu Apata, told the court that the defendant committed the offences on Feb. 5, 2021 in Ado-Ekiti.

He alleged that the defendant obtained the sum of N1.1 million from the complainant, Mr Ojo Momoh, on pretext of selling three plots of land to him, which he knew to be false.

Apata also alleged that the defendant converted the mon-

ey into his own personal use.

He said that the offences contravened Sections 328 and 295 of the Criminal Laws of Ekiti State, 2021.

The prosecutor asked the court for an adjournment to enable him to study the case file and present his witnesses.

The defendant, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges preferred against him.

Counsel to the defendant, Mr Oluwafemi Alabi, urged the court to grant his client bail, with a promise that he would not jump bail.

In her ruling, the Magistrate, Mrs Olunmi Bamidele, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with two sureties in like sum.

Bamidele adjourned the case until June 17 for hearing.

Abuja fatal road crash claims four

ABUJA

Four persons, comprising three males and one female, lost their lives in a fatal road crash in the Central Business District of Abuja on Saturday.

An eyewitness, who preferred anonymity, told our correspondent that the accident occurred around 6:00p.m, causing heavy traffic in the area.

According to the eyewitness, the victims were returning

from Sallah celebrations when the incident occurred.

Also Mr Stanley Gonji, the Rescue Team Commander of the FRSC City Gate Unit, Abuja leading the team, ensured successful evacuation of the victims from the scene

Efforts to obtain official details from the FRSC were ongoing as of the time of filing this report.

The bodies of the deceased have been conveyed to the National Hospital, Abuja.

NNPC Ltd. Posts N481bn profit in April

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.), says it has recorded N481 billion Profit After Tax (PAT) for April 2026.

The development represented a sharp jump from the N276 billion posted in March, the company said in the April Monthly Report Summary, released on its social media

handle.

The company said its crude oil and condensate production rose to 1.68 million barrels per day (mmbopd) in April, representing a 7.69 per cent increase from the March production level.

The NNPC Ltd said revenue from oil hit N4.971 trillion for the month, up from N2.77 trillion recorded in March 2026, representing a 79.23 per cent increase.

The report indicated that gas production remained largely stable at 7,730 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscf/d), compared with 7,731 mmscf/d recorded in March.

It added that cumulative statutory payments for the period January to April 2026 stood at N3.714 trillion.

The company highlighted the successful completion of the OB3 River Niger Crossing project as one of its major

milestone during the period.

It also noted continued progress on construction and installation activities along the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) Gas pipeline mainline, aimed at achieving early gas delivery to Abuja in 2026.

The report further outlined its strategic initiatives undertaken during the month aimed at strengthening Nigeria's energy infrastructure to enhance operational performances.

Lagos intensifies Ebola surveillance at MMIA amid Central, East Africa outbreak

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has advocated measures that will reduce interaction between passengers arriving from high-risk countries and other travellers, while maintaining efficient airport operations.

The Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi, on Sunday, said the move was critical as the state steps up surveillance and preparedness measures at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) to prevent the transmission of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) into Nigeria.

This, he said, was crucial as concerns grew over the resurgence of the deadly viral infection in parts of Central and East Africa.

The move comes amid heightened vigilance by health authorities following reports of Ebola outbreaks in affected African countries, prompting

Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub and principal international gateway, to reinforce its biosecurity architecture against potential cross-border transmission.

Leading a high-level delegation on an inspection and preparedness tour of MMIA, Abayomi said Lagos could not afford to be complacent given its position as the country's busiest entry point and its experience during Nigeria's historic Ebola outbreak in 2014.

The delegation were the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr Kemi Ogunyemi; Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Health, Dr Dayo Lajide.

Other delegates included the Director of Epidemiology, Biosecurity and Global Health, Dr Ismail Abdus-Salam; and senior officials of the Lagos State Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC).

The team was received by airport authorities led by the Airport Manager and Regional General Manager, South-West MMIA, Mr Olatokunbo Arewa, alongside officials from Port Health Services, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and other agencies.

During the inspection, both teams reviewed passenger movement systems, disease surveillance mechanisms, infection prevention and control procedures, emergency response plans and opportunities for stronger collaboration between state and federal authorities.

Speaking during the engagement, Abayomi recalled Nigeria's successful containment of Ebola after the virus was imported into Lagos from Liberia in July 2014, describing the episode as one of the country's greatest public health achievements.

He noted that the outbreak, which threatened to spiral into

a national crisis, was eventually contained through aggressive contact tracing, surveillance and the sacrifice of frontline health workers, including the late Dr Ameyo Adadevoh, whose actions prevented wider transmission.

According to the commissioner, the experience underscored the need for constant vigilance against highly infectious diseases in an increasingly interconnected world.

Abayomi warned that diseases such as Ebola, COVID-19 and Lassa fever continue to pose significant risks because of the volume of international travel and global mobility.

He stressed that the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic had further strengthened collaboration between Lagos State and federal agencies operating at MMIA, leading to the establishment of one of Nigeria's most robust passenger surveillance systems.

NEWS

Nigeria's democracy threatened by financial influence, analyst warns

ABUJA

A public affairs analyst, Mr George Humphrey, has said that the in-

creasing role of money in Nigeria's politics is discouraging competent citizens from seeking elective office and eroding public confidence in demo-

cratic institutions.

Humphrey made the observation in a statement issued on Sunday in Abuja.

He said that the country's political environment was characterised by the influence of financial resources, often at the expense of competence, ex-

perience and integrity.

According to him, many political parties have gradually moved away from merit-based leadership selection, creating a situation where individuals with substantial financial resources enjoy greater political opportunities than those with

proven records of service.

"Nigerian politics is increasingly becoming a contest of financial power rather than a competition of ideas, competence and vision.

"In many cases, qualifications, credentials, experience and capacity to lead are pushed aside, while money becomes the determining factor," he said.

Humphrey said the trend had contributed to growing public distrust in political institutions and electoral processes, especially among young people who viewed the political space as inaccessible to ordinary citizens.

He noted that the prevalence of money politics had continued to undermine efforts aimed at strengthening democratic governance, adding that many capable Nigerians were discouraged from seeking elective offices because of financial constraints.

"The unfortunate reality is that many citizens now view politics as an investment rather than a platform for service.

"This perception has fuelled unhealthy competition, desperation and excessive spending during elections and party activities," he said.

The analyst also expressed concern that the conduct of some political actors had projected a negative image of the

country internationally.

"It is painful that when the world looks at Nigeria, it often sees a political system characterised by desperation, excessive influence of money and personal interests rather than genuine commitment to national development.

"This should concern every patriotic Nigerian," he said.

Humphrey stressed that sustainable development could only be achieved when leadership positions were occupied by individuals with the requisite competence, character and commitment to public service.

He called on political parties, electoral stakeholders, civil society organisations and citizens to support reforms that would promote transparency, accountability and merit-based leadership.

"Nigeria cannot achieve its full potential if competence continues to be sacrificed for financial influence.

"Our democracy must reward integrity, capacity and service. Until merit becomes the foundation of political leadership, the nation's development aspirations will remain difficult to attain," he said.

He urged Nigerians to demand higher standards from political leaders and support reforms aimed at reducing the influence of money in politics.



PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF RETURN:

L-R: National Chairman, Allied People's Movement (APM), Alhaji Yusuf Dantalle; Gov Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, and the APM Organizing Secretary, Bashiru Bala, during the presentation of Certificate of Return and the party's flag to its presidential candidate, Engr. Seyi Makinde, after their Presidential Primary election, collation/unveiling of party flag in Ibadan on Saturday.

Otti, Abaribe, others emerge consensus candidates in LP primaries

UMUAHIA

Governor Alex Otti of Abia has emerged the consensus candidate in the Labour Party (LP) Governorship Primary Election in Abia.

All candidates for State House of Assembly, House of Representatives and the Senate emerged through a consensus process.

The primary elections were conducted in a manner that saw party members in all the political wards of the state overwhelmingly endorsing the consensus candidates.

In her speech, while announcing the results on Saturday in Umuahia, the Returning Officer for the Labour Party Primary elections in Abia, Mrs

Oluchi Opara, affirmed that the exercise was conducted through a direct primary across the state's political wards.

Opara, who is also the party's Electoral Committee Chairman, stated that the primary election was held in substantial compliance with the provisions of the Labour Party Constitution.

She also said that the exercise was conducted in compliance with the Electoral Act 2026, and the Labour Party Electoral Guidelines 2026.

She said that upon the conclusion of voting and the collation of results from the various local government areas, the committee duly compiled and authenticated the outcome of the exercise in accordance with the party's guidelines and applicable electoral laws.

The National Secretary of the Labour Party, Chief Acho Obioma, said that the party's primary election was successfully conducted across the wards in the state, with widespread participation by members.

Obioma described the exercise as peaceful and orderly, noting that no incidents were recorded during the conduct of the election.

He commended party members for their conduct and praised electoral officials for effectively discharging their responsibilities at the ward level.

According to him, the successful completion of the primary marks the beginning of the party's next phase of political engagement and expansion.

He expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the exercise, saying it culminated in a transparent and peaceful process.

In his acceptance speech, Gov. Otti commended the party's electoral and primary election committees for conducting a peaceful and credible primary election across the state.

The governor said that no adverse reports were received from any part of the state, describing the process as orderly and transparent.

He also lauded the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), election observers and members of the monitoring teams for overseeing the exercise.

The governor congratulated all candidates who emerged from the primaries and formally accepted his nomination on behalf of the party.

According to him, the successful conduct of the primaries demonstrated the party's capacity to manage internal processes without rancour or violence.

Police launch manhunt as bandits abduct 2, injure driver in Katsina

KATSINA

Suspected armed bandits have attacked a vehicle along the Karaduwu-Matazu Road in Matazu Local Government Area of Katsina State, abducting two occupants and injuring the driver.

The spokesperson for the Katsina State Police Command, DSP Abubakar Sadiq-Aliyu, confirmed the incident in a statement on Sunday in Katsina.

He said the attack occurred at about 11a.m. on Saturday

when the assailants, armed with dangerous weapons, intercepted a red Peugeot 406 saloon car traveling along the route.

"The driver, Abdullahi Sa'id, sustained a gunshot wound to his right arm during the attack," Sadiq-Aliyu said.

He added that two occupants, Abdullahi Batsari and Amina Abdullahi were abducted before security operatives arrived at the scene.

"Upon receiving the report, the Divisional Police Officer in Matazu, accompanied by operatives of the Village Commu-

nity Response Unit (VCRU), swiftly mobilised to the scene.

"The team secured the area and evacuated the injured driver to a medical facility for treatment," he said.

The police spokesperson further stated that the Commissioner of Police in the state, Ali Umar-Fage, personally visited the scene and ordered the deployment of additional personnel and operational assets to strengthen ongoing search-and-rescue operations.

He said the deployment was aimed at ensuring the safe res-

cue of the abducted victims and the arrest of those responsible for the attack.

Sadiq-Aliyu assured residents that the command remains committed to tackling criminal activities across the state and urged the public to continue supporting security agencies with credible information.

He said: "Efforts to rescue the victims and apprehend the perpetrators are ongoing, and further developments will be communicated as investigations progress."

NNPP NEC appoints Bala Mohammed acting national chairman

ABUJA

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has ratified the appointment of Alhaji Bala Yunusa Mohammed as Acting National Chairman.

Mohammed's appointment was confirmed at the party's 11th NEC meeting at the weekend in Abuja.

The appointment followed the resignation of the former National Chairman, Dr Ajuji Ahmed.

The NEC also ratified the results of primary elections conducted nationwide ahead of the 2027 general elections.

It further approved the appointment of acting state chairmen for Ogun, Delta, Nasarawa and Cross River to strengthen the party's structures.

In his welcome address, the National Secretary of the NNPP, Mr Dipo Olayoku, said the meeting was the culmination of preparations leading to the 2027 polls.

Olayoku said the party's electoral process began from the ward, local government and state levels, where members elected candidates to fly the NNPP flag.

He recalled that the party ratified its congresses in December 2025, noting that in spite of challenges, the NNPP had remained resilient and focused.

According to him, the meeting was convened in compliance with relevant provisions of the Electoral Act to ratify primary election outcomes nationwide.

He said the party's performance in the 2023 general elections had elevated its profile, producing its first governor and federal lawmakers.

Olayoku commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for its commitment to democratic principles and expressed confidence in its leadership and capacity.

He said the party adopted the consensus method for its primaries and thanked state chairmen, executives and members for their sacrifices and commitment.

The national secretary acknowledged that some elected officials had left the party through political realignments, but urged members to remain steadfast and focused on improving future electoral outcomes.



MOHAMMED

Obi emerges NDC presidential flagbearer, pledges 10,000MW power boost

ABUJA

Presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), Mr Peter Obi, has pledged to increase Nigeria's electricity generation and distribution by at least 10,000 megawatts within four years if elected president in the 2027 general elections.

Obi made the commitment at the weekend in Abuja while accepting his nomination as the party's presidential flag bearer, declaring that "a New Nigeria is Possible".

He also pledged to transform the economy, tackle insecurity, create jobs and end widespread hunger through targeted investments in key sectors.

The former Anambra State governor said his administration would be driven by transparency, productivity and national unity, stressing that Nigeria's current challenges required urgent and decisive leadership.

Obi noted that the country continues to face significant socio-economic challenges, including insecurity, poverty, unemployment, hunger, and limited access to healthcare and education.

He, however, expressed confidence that Nigeria could overcome its challenges through efficient resource management and visionary leadership.

A key highlight of his address was his promise to overhaul the power sector, which

he described as central to economic growth and industrial development.

"Nigeria today is the nation with the highest number of citizens lacking access to electricity globally," he said.

He noted that Nigeria generates and distributes about 4,000 megawatts of electricity for a population of over 200 million people, describing the figure as inadequate.

Comparing Nigeria with countries such as South Africa and Egypt, which generate over 40,000 megawatts in spite of smaller populations, Obi said the gap reflected a major structural challenge.

"Over the next four years, I commit to ensuring a minimum of 10,000 megawatts increase in power generation and distribution," he said.

On security, Obi pledged to deploy intelligence-driven and technology-based approaches to tackle insecurity, while addressing root causes such as poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

He also promised to strengthen the healthcare system, including increasing health insurance coverage from about 10 per cent to over 20 per cent within four years.

According to him, his administration would raise healthcare spending to at least 10 per cent of GDP and ensure that every one of Nigeria's 8,809 political wards has a functional primary healthcare centre.

On education, Obi pledged increased investment in schools, teacher training, technology and vocational skills development, saying human capital is the foundation of national transformation.

He expressed concern over rising food insecurity, noting that over 35 million Nigeri-

ans are projected to face acute hunger in spite of the country's agricultural potential.

"We have absolutely no justification for being among the world's hungriest nations," he said, adding that his government would prioritise agricultural productivity to shift Nigeria from consumption to production.

Obi also promised targeted support for micro, small and medium enterprises through tax incentives, access to affordable credit and job-creation policies aimed at empowering young Nigerians.

Earlier, NDC National Leader, Sen. Seriake Dickson, presented the party's flag to Obi,

describing it as "a symbol of victory for Nigerians".

The National Chairman of the party, Sen. Moses Cleopas, said the NDC had recorded significant growth within three months of its registration and was positioned to offer Nigerians a credible alternative ahead of the 2027 polls.



AN INSPECTION TOUR OF OBA MARKET:

L-R Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dannis Idahosa, Senator Matthew Urhoghide, Former Deputy Governor, Pius Odubu, Governor Monday Okpebholo, and Secretary of APC, Edo State, Lawrence Okah, at an inspection tour of Oba Market where enthusiastic traders of the rebuilt Market cheered the Governor upon his arrival.

Osun 2026: APC unity crucial to avert defeat- Party chieftain

OSOGBO

Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has urged party members to close ranks and unite ahead of the Aug. 15 governorship election in the state.

Oyintiloye cautioned against bitterness, careless remarks, inflammatory utterances and anti-party activities that could undermine the party's chances at the poll.

Speaking with journalists on Sunday in Osogbo, he stressed that unity within the party was critical to securing victory.

He also called on party leaders and elders to urgently address grievances and dissatisfaction among members, expressing confidence that the APC would win the election if internal issues were resolved.

According to him, victory for the party is non-negotiable, and any factor capable of hindering its success must be tackled decisively.

Oyintiloye warned that entering the election as a divided house would be a costly mistake, emphasising that unity and a shared purpose are essential for success.

He added that all loopholes and lingering grievances that

could prolong the party's stay in opposition should be resolved without delay.

"The governorship election is fast approaching, and there is an urgent need for us to come together as one big family.

"There is no doubt that some members may be aggrieved for one reason or another, but such grievances should be addressed promptly to consolidate our impending victory.

"No divided house can win a battle. That is why I am appealing to all members to resolve their differences. The APC is cruising to victory," he said.

Oyintiloye described the party's candidate, Alhaji Bola Oyebamiji, as a "sellable" contender with the capacity to win, urging members to support him fully.

He expressed confidence that with the backing of party leaders and stakeholders, including Chief Bisi Akande, Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola, Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Sen. Ajibola Basiru, APC National Secretary, and Sen. Iyiola Omisore, Osun would return to progressive governance after the election.

Oyintiloye maintained that the APC would win the poll, noting that many voters were eager to return the party to power in the state.

ABUJA

Mrs Anita Zugwai-Chukwu has emerged as the sole presidential candidate of the Young Progressives Party (YPP) for the 2027 general elections.

Zugwai-Chukwu emerged at the party's national convention held on Saturday in Abuja, attended by party leaders, delegates and supporters from across the country.

Speaking on the sidelines of the convention, the National Chairman of YPP, Comrade Bishop Amakiri, reaffirmed the party's commitment to its founding principles of service in spite of political challenges

and realignments.

Amakiri said the party had consistently produced credible candidates who had gone on to win elections, adding that YPP remained focused on promoting competent leaders dedicated to serving the people.

According to him, public office holders elected on the party's platform have remained faithful to its mantra of "Service to the People".

He stressed that the slogan remained the intellectual property of the party and should not be appropriated by other political parties.

The chairman said YPP had produced notable political office holders, including law-

YPP unveils Zugwai-Chukwu as sole presidential candidate for 2027

makers and legislative leaders, who had distinguished themselves through effective representation and leadership.

Commenting on the death of former senator Ifeanyi Ubah, Amakiri acknowledged that the loss had significantly affected the party.

"It would be unfair to say that Senator Ifeanyi Ubah's death did not affect the party. He was a strong force and contributed immensely," he said.

He, however, rejected suggestions that the party had lost relevance, noting that no general election had been conducted since Ubah's death.

Amakiri said Ubah's electoral successes brought national visibility to YPP and laid the foundation for its growth and recognition.

"If Senator Ubah had not

won election, perhaps many Nigerians would not have known about the Young Progressives Party," he said.

He added that the party had consolidated on those gains and continued to make inroads into Nigeria's political landscape.

"We miss him greatly, but we remain focused. Wherever he is, he will be proud of the contributions he made to the party," Amakiri added.

The chairman said YPP was intensifying efforts to mobilise like-minded Nigerians and strengthen its structures ahead of the 2027 elections.

He also dismissed speculation that the party might collapse its structure into the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), describing the reports as unfounded.

Troops foil kidnap plot, kill 1 terrorist in Kogi

LOKOJA

Troops 12 Brigade, 2 Division Nigerian Army have foiled a planned kidnap operation and neutralised a terrorist during a precision ambush in Lokoja Local Government Area of Kogi.

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

Abdullahi said the troops, acting on credible intelligence, intercepted the criminals along Old Obajana-Tajimi Road.

He said the operation led to the recovery of an AK-47

rifle, ammunition, magazines and other items, while the rest of the gang fled with gunshot wounds.

He said the ambush was conducted on May 30, following intelligence that terrorists were planning kidnapping activities within Jakura II Community.

"Troops swiftly deployed and occupied a suspected terrorist crossing point along Old Obajana-Tajimi Road, denying the criminals freedom of action.

"On contact, troops engaged the terrorists with effective fire.

"During the firefight, one terrorist was neutralised while

other members of the group escaped, believed to be carrying gunshot wounds.

"A follow-up exploitation of the area led to the recovery of one AK-47 rifle, five magazines, 70 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, one bandolier and mobile phones," he stated.

Abdullahi noted that the items recovered further confirmed the gang's involvement in kidnapping activities in the area.

He emphasised that the successful operation demonstrates the 12 Brigade's resolve to sustain offensive operations

against terrorists and criminal elements threatening law-abiding citizens.

He added that further exploitation of the area is ongoing to track and apprehend the fleeing terrorists.

He said the Commander 12 Brigade, Brig. -Gen. Kasim Sidi, commended the troops for their vigilance, combat efficiency and commitment to duty.

The army reassured residents of the brigade's determination to maintain pressure on criminals and urged members of the public to continue providing timely and actionable intelligence to security agencies.

NEWS**JUDICIARY**

Case transfer: Supreme Court okays NIMASA's appeal against lower court

ABUJA

The Supreme Court has okayed an appeal filed by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) against a judgment of the Appeal Court transferring a case to the Federal High Court (FHC).

The Court of Appeal in Lagos, in its consequential order, had directed a Lagos State High Court to transfer a suit filed by two claimants against NIMASA and three others to the FHC for accelerated hear-

ing and determination.

The appellate court held that the Lagos court had no jurisdiction to entertain the suit.

Dissatisfied with the appellate court judgment, NIMASA approached the Supreme Court for proper interpretation.

The regulatory agency named the claimants; the Integrated Oil and Gas Ltd and its Chairman, Cap. Emmanuel Ihenacho (rtd.), a former Minister of Interior, as 1st and 2nd respondents in the appeal.

In its appellant's brief filed by Chief Emeka Ngige, SAN, NI-

MASA argued that Section 15 of Court of Appeal Act which the Appeal Court relied on was wrongly invoked as the trial Lagos State High Court lacked powers to transfer a matter to the Federal High Court.

The agency argued that there was no provision in the High Court Law which empower the trial court to transfer cases in which it lacks jurisdiction to the Federal High Court.

It submitted that while FHC could make an order transferring a matter in which it lacked jurisdiction to a state high court based on Section 22(2) of the Federal High Court Act (as amended), the latter court

cannot make the same order of transfer under Section 22(3) of the Act.

On their part, the 1st and 2nd respondents, represented by Emmanuel Ekpenyong of the law firm of Fred-Young & Evans LP, urged the apex court to determine whether the court below rightly invoked the provisions in contest.

Ekpenyong, who prayed the court to dismiss the appeal, inter alia, submitted that Section 15 of the Court of Appeal Act vests the court below with the power to make any order in ensuring matters are determined on their merit.

"The consequential order

made by the Court of Appeal was pursuant to its powers under Section 15 of its Act," he said.

A five-panel member of the apex court, in a unanimous judgement delivered by Justice Moore Adumein, set aside the Appeal Court decision.

Although the apex court judgment was delivered on April 17, its certified true copy was sighted on Friday in Abuja.

The panel held that what the appellate court ought to have done was to strike out the suit, having found that the High Court of Lagos State had no jurisdiction to hear the suit.

"It should be noted that the general principle of law is that where a court lacks jurisdiction to entertain a cause or matter, the appropriate or proper order to make is to strike it out.

"It also is settled that the Federal High Court has the competence to transfer a cause or matter to a High Court of a state or the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja by virtue of Section 22 (2) of the Federal High Court Act (as amended).

"On the other hand, the High Court of a state, like the High Court of Lagos State, cannot transfer a cause or matter to the Federal High Court, where it has no jurisdiction to entertain it.

"And it has no rule of procedure which enables it to transfer the action, cause, matter or suit to the Federal High Court," the apex court held.

The claimants; the Integrated Oil and Gas Ltd and the ex-minister had filed the suit marked: LD/ADR/91/2013 at the Lagos State High Court.

**SALLAH HOMAGE:**

President Bola Tinubu (8th L); Gov Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State (7th L) Deputy Governor of Lagos, Obafemi Hamzat (8TH R) and some APC Candidates for the 2027 National Assembly election during their Sallah Homage to the President in Lagos on Friday.

33 appear in court over Ebonyi communal clash, killings

ABAKALIKI

No fewer than 33 suspects have been arraigned before an Ebonyi High Court sitting in Abakaliki, over a communal clash between two communities in the state.

The two communities are Amasiri Community in Afikpo Local Government Area and Okporojo community in Oso Edda, Edda Local Government Area of the state.

The suspects were arraigned on a four-count charge bordering on conspiracy, communal disorder, arson and murder.

The defendants, however,

pleaded not guilty.

The suspects include: two traditional rulers, Geoffrey Onya and Idam Bassey, as well as the Coordinator of Amasiri Development Centre, Byron Anya.

Others include Emmanuel Ngwoke, Samuel Eni, Eze Ekeocha, Chukwudi Nwachinere, Chukwuemeka Ifesinachi, Emmanuel Ogbonnaya, Julius Oko, Eze Uchendu and Sunday Eburu among others.

The accused persons, who allegedly committed the offences on January 29, 2026 murdered Kalu Dick, Ifeoma Oduko Uduma, Anthony Eku-mankama and Eze Orji Ndukwue at Okporojo community in

Oso Edda

The offences, according to the prosecution, are punishable under Section 319(1) of the Criminal Code Law, Cap 33, Vol. 1, Laws of Ebonyi State, 2009.

Counsel to the defendants, Chief Mudi Erhenede, made an oral application for the bail of five of the suspects, including the two traditional rulers, the development centre coordinator and two female defendants.

Erhenede urged the court to grant them bail based on their status and the provisions of Order 7 of the Criminal Justice Rules, 2023.

He argued that the accused

persons had been in custody for five months and that the police had recommended their release.

Meanwhile, Counsel to the state Government, Mrs Chinyere Anoke, who represented the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Ben Odo, opposed the bail application.

Anoke argued that the defendants were facing murder charges and granting them bail would be inappropriate.

Justice Emmanuel Ogbunefi, adjourned the matter until June 5 and June 17 for the defence counsel to file a formal written application for bail.

Court jails hotel employee for theft

BENIN CITY

An Egor Magistrates' Court in Benin has sentenced a 26-year-old man, Philip Reuben, to two months imprisonment for conspiracy and theft.

Reuben was convicted of stealing household items worth

N660,000.

The Magistrate, Dorothy Adamaigbo, however, gave the convict an option of N20,000 fine.

She said that the conviction would serve as a deterrent to others.

Police prosecutor Evans Okunoghae had told the court

that on May 3, 2026, at Ugbi-yokho Quarters in Benin, the convict and other suspects, currently at large, conspired to commit the crime.

"On the said date, Reuben and others stole an air conditioner, iron rods, and cooking pots worth N660,000, belonging to Osaigbovo Eboigbe,

the complainant," he told the court.

The prosecutor said the offences contravened Sections 412(2), and 294(7), of the Criminal Law of Edo State, 2022.

He said that local vigilantes arrested Reuben and handed him over to the Police.

ADC leadership crisis: CJ reassigns Nafiu-Bala Gombe's case against Mark, Aregbesola

ABUJA

The Chief Judge of the Federal High Court (FHC), Justice John Tshoho, has reassigned a case filed by Nafiu-Bala Gombe, a former National Deputy Chairman of African Democratic Party (ADC), to another judge for adjudication.

It was gathered that the suit, which was before Justice Emeka Nwite, had been reassigned to Justice Peter Lifu following the former's recent elevation to the Court of Appeal.

The National Judicial Council (NJC), at its 111th meeting on May 13, had recommended the appointment of 12 new justices of the Court of Appeal, including Justice Nwite, to President Bola Tinubu for approval.

Gombe, in the suit, is seeking an order restraining Sen. David Mark, the embattled National Chairman of the ADC; Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, the National Secretary, and members of their interim National Working Committee (NWC) from parading themselves as

the party's leaders.

He had argued that the emergence of Mark, Aregbesola and other NWC members as party's leaders breached the provisions of the party's constitution and the Electoral Act.

Gombe had sued ADC, Mark, Aregbesola, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Ralph Nwosu as 1st to 5th defendants respectively in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1819/2025.

Nwosu was the former ADC National Chairman who stepped down for David Mark leadership of the party.

Justice Nwite had, on April 14, adjourned the case sine die (indefinitely) following Gombe's request to await the Supreme Court's judgment in the appeal filed by Mark.

However, the Supreme Court, on April 30, set aside the order made by the Court of Appeal in Abuja ordering the maintenance of status quo ante bellum in the leadership dispute in ADC, on which INEC acted in de-recognising the Mark-led leadership of the party.

Man, 39, arraigned for allegedly assaulting police officer on duty

ADO-EKITI

The police have dragged a 39-year-old man, Adeniyi Gbenga, before an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly assaulting a police officer.

The defendant, of no fixed address, is standing trial on a charge of assault.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The prosecutor, ASP Akinwale Oriyomi, told the court that the defendant and others now at large, committed the offence on May 21, at about 10:30

a.m. in Igede-Ekiti.

He alleged that the defendant and his accomplices willfully obstructed and assaulted a police corporal named Alade Olu, while discharging his lawful duty.

The offence contravenes the provision of section 187(b) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Abayomi Adeosun, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N50,000 with one surety in like sum.

He adjourned the case until June 26, for hearing.

Foreign

NEWS

Hundreds arrested and dozens of police injured after Champions League riots in France

A total of 219 people have been injured in clashes between football fans and police across France after Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) won the Champions League final against Arsenal.

Eight were in a serious condition, Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez said. Thousands of officers were deployed to curb unrest that disrupted bus, train and rail services in the capital, Paris. Fifty-seven of them were injured. Nuñez said 780 people had been arrested over the violence - with more than 450 in custody. A person was found dead after an accident on Paris's ring road, which rioters tried to block overnight.

Some 6,000 police have been mobilised for Sunday's victory parade at the site of the Eiffel Tower.

Authorities say they are prepared to deal with any trouble.

The interior minister said the security forces would be "firm" in their response.

"We are a great country for maintaining public order. We allow freedom of assembly, but not excesses," he said.

There was similar violence when PSG won the trophy last year, with celebrations turning deadly.

Thousands of officers had been deployed this time to curb unrest that disrupted bus, train and rail services in Paris.

The vast Champs-Élysées was swarmed by fans shortly after the local team won in a penalty shootout.

Footage shows flares being set off, electric bikes burning on roads and revellers smashing the glass of at least one shopfront.

Police fired tear gas to disperse crowds in the city centre.

Paris police made 480 arrests, with 277 taken into custody, including 82 minors.

The figures were provisional, the Paris prosecutor's office said. It added that offences ranged from attacks on officers to attacks on property, theft, as well as illegal possession of weapons.

The circumstances surrounding the death of the 24-year-old near Porte Maillot in the Paris ring road remain unclear. Some witnesses said he was riding a motorcycle when he crashed into concrete blocks.

A teenager was also in critical condition following a brawl in another area of Paris. It is not clear if they were involved in the football-related rioting.

Scenes from Paris were similar to last year's celebrations of PSG victory.

"The vast majority go out to celebrate and it goes very well," the French interior minister said on Sunday.

"But other individuals, who are not PSG supporters, who don't even watch the match, come to cause trouble and disturbances. We are here to prevent them from doing so. Our response is very firm."

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen wrote on X: "Only in France does a football club's victory spark riots."

"Only in France does everyone feel compelled to lock themselves in their homes on the evening of a victory to avoid being confronted with violence," she said.



POLICE ARREST:

Authorities say they are prepared to deal with any trouble.

Japan defence minister denies militarism and criticises China's 'huge arsenal'

Japan's defence minister has rebutted Beijing's claim that his country was engaging in a "new militarism" - criticising China for its military expansion and lack of transparency.

Shinjiro Koizumi argued it was actually China and its "huge arsenal" of weapons that was of "serious concern" to the international community.

His remarks, on the last day of a defence summit in Singapore, were some of the most pointed yet from Tokyo in response to China's repeated criticism of Japan's military build-up under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

The two countries have a long history of tensions stemming from Japan's invasion of China during World War Two.

Last week, a day before the Singapore summit began, China's national defence ministry spokesman Jiang Bin had warned "the grey rhino of a remilitarised Japan is gathering speed" and

called on the international community to "work together to contain Japan's neo-militarism".

Japan has been steadily increasing its defence budget, setting spending records for 12 consecutive years. Its latest budget, approved in December by its cabinet, is for more than 9 trillion yen (\$57bn; £42bn) - moving the country closer to its target of spending 2% of its GDP on the military.

The Japanese government has previously insisted it was not seeking war and only wants to bolster its defences.

In his speech on Sunday at the Shangri-la Dialogue, Koizumi said it was "only natural" that every country, including Japan, updates its defences to meet new challenges and to contribute to peace in the region.

He sought to reassure the roomful of officials from Asian countries, including several that were invaded by Japan

in WW2, by promising Japan would proceed "with a high degree of transparency" and engage in constant dialogue with other countries.

"What are we developing these capabilities for? And based on what thinking? Japan will move forward while making a clear explanation to the international community," he said.

Koizumi rebuffed the idea that Japan was engaged in "new militarism", saying it was "nothing further from the truth".

"There's a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers," he said, in a veiled reference to China. "Japan has neither of these weapons. And yet Japan is labelled [with] 'new militarism'. Isn't it strange?"

Following his speech, a representative of the Chinese military asked whether Japan would issue an apology to China, South Korea and South

East Asian victims in WW2.

Shinjiro Koizumi sidestepped the dialogue participant's question while taking aim at China.

"China continues to increase its defence spending at a high level and is rapidly expanding its military capabilities across a wide range of areas without sufficient transparency," he said.

"China's external approach and military activities are matters of serious concern for Japan and the international community."

He added that "Japan's door is always open" for communication with China.

The issue of Japan apologising for wartime atrocities has long been a sticking point in the two countries' relations, with China in the past criticising some of the apologies as insufficient. Koizumi's father, Junichiro Koizumi, issued several apologies when he was prime minister.

Colombia votes in presidential election that could redefine relations with US

Colombia is heading to the polls to choose a new president.

The election has polarised Colombia after months of tension with the US.

The election is being held after months of public recrimination between current left-wing President Gustavo Petro and his US counterpart Donald Trump over a number of issues including drug trafficking and American intervention in the region.

Colombia's constitution prohibits Petro seeking re-election and he has thrown his support behind Iván Cepeda. Challenging him are right-wing candidate Abelardo de la Espriella and conservative senator Paloma Valencia.

The outcome of the election could redefine which countries the Latin American nation aligns itself with and how the government intends to tackle drug gangs amid spiralling violence.

As polls opened, Petro told a crowd in the capital, Bogotá, that Sunday's vote would "determine where Colombia is headed" and would "define the [country's] destiny".

Behind him is a white-paneled wall.EPA

Iván Cepeda has pledged to continue the policies of the current administration

Voting began at 08:00 local time (13:00 GMT) and will close at 16:00 on Sunday.

None of the candidates appear likely to win an outright majority, with a run-off vote expected on 21 June.

Polling suggests Cepeda has the greatest support, with de la Espriella his next-closest rival.

Cepeda has promised to con-

tinue with the Petro administration's policy of "total peace", which sought negotiated settlements with armed insurgent groups that engage in drug trafficking - though talks have stalled or fallen apart and there has been renewed violence.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in a recent report that armed conflict in Colombia last year had affected civilians the most in a decade.

Just hours before voting began, authorities in the northern Cesar region relocated a polling station following a drone attack on security forces that left a soldier injured, local media report.

More than a quarter of Colombia's municipalities face some risk of violence as the country's 41 million voters head to the polls, according to the nation's Electoral Observation Mission.

De la Espriella and Valencia have vowed to launch a military crackdown if elected.

Right-wing presidential candidate Abelardo de la Espriella appeared behind bulletproof glass at a rally last week

Colombia's presidential hopefuls have campaigned amid persistent political violence, with one candidate fatally shot last summer. Last week, de la Espriella appeared at a rally in Medellín behind bulletproof glass.

Colombia's defence ministry has deployed 408,000 soldiers and police to secure the election.

Both de la Espriella and Valencia have expressed a desire to restore Colombia's close security alliance with the US.

Laos cave survivors help with plan to find last two missing men

Some of those freed from a flooded cave in Laos are helping in efforts to find the last two missing men trapped inside, rescuers have said.

So far, five of the seven initially missing have been rescued but it is believed the remaining two men are trapped deeper inside the cave in the mountain area of central Xaysomboun province.

The men, all local villagers, entered the narrow tunnels on 20 May in search of gold but flash floods stopped them from leaving.

On Sunday, a rescuer told AFP that several survivors were giving advice from their hospital room on how to find the remaining men, including descriptions of the deeper part of the cave.

A Laotian rescue group said the men's information on the cave system - which extends deep underground and in some places measures around 50cm (20in) wide - was "considered substantial" and used in preparing a new search plan.

A fresh effort to find the remaining two men was expect-

ed on Sunday.

It comes as reports said the four men who left the cave on Saturday managed to free themselves without the help of rescuers after the water level lowered.

One unverified video posted to social media showed cheers from both rescuers and on-lookers as the men emerged from the cave.

It was not clear what caused the water to lower, but a Japanese rescue diver told the Associated Press on Sunday that flood water was being drained from the cave.

Yoshitaka Isaji said the passage used in rescue efforts on Saturday was currently impassable because a drainage pump had broken, but repair efforts were ongoing.

Earlier in the week, a plan to pump out flood water from the tunnels also failed.

Specialist divers from other countries including Thailand, Indonesia, France and Australia are also helping the searches.

The first man was freed by rescuers on Friday.

NEWS**Foreign****Blast kills dozens in rebel-held village in Myanmar**

An explosion has killed at least 55 people and wounded dozens more in a village in a region of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, under insurgent control.

A source familiar with the situation on the ground in Kaung Tat, a village in Namkham Township in Shan State, near the Chinese border, said 25 women and 30 men had died. Other reports gave slightly different casualty figures.

Rescue teams were searching for and extracting people trapped beneath rubble, the source added.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), which controls the area and which has been engaged in bitter fighting with Myanmar's military junta, said explosives used in mining and quarrying had exploded.

Residents described scenes of devastation and confusion following the explosion.

One wrote on social media that many people had initially

believed the blast was caused by an air strike.

Children were among the dead and hundreds of homes had been damaged, affecting almost an entire neighbourhood, according to the post.

"By sheer luck, my phone saved my life," the resident wrote.

"I was sitting in my bedroom eating noodles and looking at my phone. If I had been eating in the kitchen, I probably would not be alive today."

The resident, who said she had suffered a minor leg injury and her own home had been destroyed, described scenes of panic and grief in the aftermath of the blast.

"People were crying, calling out for their parents," she wrote. "It felt as if the world had come to an end."

She questioned why a facility containing explosives had been allowed to operate close to residential areas, saying families of those killed would not be satisfied unless the authorities provided a full explanation.

**EBOLA OUTBREAK:**

DR Congo is the epicentre of the outbreak though a few cases have been detected in Uganda

Nigerian retired general abducted with his wife in the North-West

A retired senior Nigerian military officer and his wife have been kidnapped by armed men in north-west Nigeria, the army has confirmed.

Maj Gen Rabe Abubakar, who had a high-profile job as military spokesman between 2015 and 2017, was abducted from his car on Saturday while travelling in Katsina state.

Efforts are now under way to rescue the couple and track down their captors, military spokesman Gen Michael Onoja told the BBC.

The kidnapping highlights the continuing security challenges facing parts of north-west Nigeria, where criminal gangs known locally as "bandits" frequently carry out kidnappings for ransom, as well as cattle rustling and attacks on rural communities.

Some militant jihadists have also operated in the region. An alleged militant camp in Sokoto state was the target of a US airstrike on 25 December last year.

Katsina has been one of the states most affected by the violence.

Zamfara state, which neighbours both Katsina and Sokoto, has seen years of similar violence, with some communities previously attempting to make peace with armed groups, efforts that have largely failed to bring lasting stability.

The government has intensified actions to curb kidnapping, including introducing measures aimed at discouraging ransom payments. However, attacks have continued.

No group has said it was behind Saturday's abduction and the army is still waiting for the kidnappers to contact the fam-

ily, the army said.

Local reports say the retired general was travelling to Katsina for a wedding when gunmen attacked his vehicle.

Abubakar's driver reportedly escaped despite being hit by gunfire, while the former military spokesman and his wife were taken away by the attackers into a nearby forested area.

The abduction comes days after another deadly attack in Katsina state. On Friday, armed men reportedly raided Kiliya village in Dutsinma Local Government Area, killing at least 16 people.

Police have not yet commented on the reported killings.

Residents said the attack happened shortly after Friday prayers, as people gathered to celebrate the Eid al-Adha holiday.

Security agencies had issued warnings about possible attacks during the celebrations, prompting some state governments to introduce measures aimed at limiting large public gatherings and strengthening security.

Ebola spread in DR Congo 'deeply alarming', MSF warns

The rapid spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo has created a "deeply alarming" situation, the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has warned.

Speaking two weeks on from the outbreak being declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), MSF deputy director Dr Alan Gonzales said never before had "so many cases" been recorded so soon.

His comments came as WHO head Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, visited the eastern Congolese province of Ituri - the worst-hit area - to oversee virus containment efforts.

There are now more than 1,000 suspected Ebola cases in the DR Congo, and at least 246 deaths. Neighbouring Uganda has reported nine confirmed cases and one death.

WHO head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was in eastern DR Congo's Ituri province on Saturday.

"Two weeks after the declaration of the Ebola disease outbreak in Ituri Province, the situation is deeply alarming," Gonzales said in a statement on Saturday.

"Never before has an Ebola outbreak recorded so many cases so soon after its declaration," he said, stressing his teams on the ground were "witnessing a response that has not yet caught up to the rapid spread of the epidemic".

"The reality today is that nobody knows the true scale and severity of this outbreak. New suspected cases are being reported daily, yet hundreds of samples remain untested."

Gonzales added that containment efforts and humanitarian aid deliveries were being delayed by "major constraints", including border and airport closures.

The WHO has repeatedly warned that ongoing conflict in DR Congo was also significantly hampering the Ebola outbreak response.

After arriving in Ituri's provincial capital of Bunia on Saturday, Tedros said he and his team were in DR Congo "to see how the response is running and if there are challenges to help".

He urged communities in the centre of the outbreak to play a bigger role in fighting the disease, saying they "understand the problems better and

they know the solution as well".

Tedros also said he understood how important it was for people to honour their dead at funerals - but warned that right now this was dangerous.

"Certain practices including touching of bodies of those who have died from Ebola, can spread the virus further. While we grieve for those we've lost, we must do everything we can so that we don't lose another, and get into a cycle of grief," he said.

Ebola viruses normally infect animals, typically fruit bats, but outbreaks among humans can sometimes start when people eat or handle infected animals.

Ebola spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person, including blood, vomit, diarrhoea, saliva, urine, semen and sweat. It can also be transmitted by touching contaminated objects such as needles, bedding or clothing.

Patients with Ebola need to be isolated in hospital, with treatment involving managing symptoms - such as help with breathing and fluids given directly into a vein to stop dehydration - according to the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

In Bunia, daily life appears largely unchanged. People continue to move around, trade and go about their normal activities.

On arrival at the city's airport, passengers are directed to hand washing stations where they are required to clean their hands with soap and water.

Public health advisories are displayed in parts of the airport, while information is also being broadcast on radio and television. These messages are being delivered in local languages as well as in French, the DR Congo's official language.

One of the WHO head's first stops was the National Institute for Biomedical Research laboratory in Bunia, where samples from suspected Ebola patients are tested.

Local health officials say the facility is now able to return results within 24 hours, helping doctors quickly identify infections and begin treatment.

Until recently, samples had to be transported more than 1,500km (932 miles) to DR Congo's capital, Kinshasa, causing delays that health workers feared could cost lives and allow the virus to spread further.

Israel seizes castle in Lebanon as it expands ground offensive

The Israeli military has captured the strategic site of Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon, in what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described as a "decisive shift" in its offensive against Hezbollah.

It comes as ground troops move ever deeper into Lebanese territory beyond their original demarcation line of the Litani river.

Meanwhile the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) increased the zone in southern Lebanon that it has warned residents to evacuate from.

Lebanon's prime minister

has accused Israel of carrying out "collective punishment".

Perched over the Litani valley, Beaufort Castle has been key to controlling the region around it since the Crusaders built it some 900 years ago. The Israeli army captured it 44 years ago in what's known in Israel as the First Lebanon War.

In a statement on Sunday following its capture, Netanyahu said it was "a decisive stage and decisive shift in our policy".

"We have broken the barrier of fear. We are taking the initiative, we are operating on all fronts - in Syria, in Gaza, in

Lebanon," he said.

Netanyahu added that his aim was to "deepen and expand our grip on the places that were under Hezbollah's control".

Defence Minister Israel Katz recalled the battle 44 years ago against the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) - one of the first of the Lebanon war. He said the Golan Brigade, which took it then, had returned and raised the Israeli flag above it.

So, it's a highly symbolic as well as strategic victory, as far as Israel is concerned.

In 1982 Israeli forces occupied the castle - which is just

14.5km (nine miles) from the Israeli border - but left in 2000 when they withdrew from their self-declared buffer zone in southern Lebanon.

For the Lebanese, it's the latest historic landmark to be seized in recent days, while the city of Nabatieh further north appears to increasingly be a target for the IDF.

Katz said control of the castle and the ridge it stands upon was an important step in protecting Israeli communities on the other side of the border.

The latest evacuation warning is the second time in recent days

that Israel has told residents to leave the entire south of Lebanon below the Zahrani river.

"Anyone present near Hezbollah elements, facilities or means of combat endangers their life," an IDF spokesman said.

The spokesman said a "significant number of IDF ground soldiers" were involved in the operation, which was "currently expanding to additional areas".

It's another clear indication that Israeli ground forces are moving ever deeper into Lebanese territory beyond their original demarcation line of the Litani river.

Sports

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

2026 President Federation Cup: Bendel Insurance in round of 32 battle with Crown FC

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club will on Monday, June 1, 2026 file out against Crown FC of Ogbomoso in the Round of 32 of the ongoing President Federation Cup at the Mobolaji Johnson Stadium in Lagos State.

The match is scheduled to



BENDEL INSURANCE TEAM

as Boboye charges players to deliver

kickoff at 4pm at the Mobolaji Johnson Stadium in Lagos.

The 2023 Champions, according to the manager Kennedy Boboye will be approaching the game with all seriousness, noting that there is no second chance in challenge Cup.

Boboye added that there is no room for complacency as all the clubs that qualified and come this far are not pushovers.

"We face Crown Football Club in Lagos and I have reminded our boys to approach the match as if it is the final match. Being a premier league club does not guarantee your victory over NNL or NLO clubs. You must work for the result you want to achieve."

"We know Crown FC and they are a good side no one can just brush aside. So, we are in Lagos to fight for what we want which is to qualify for the next round as our focus is now only on the federation cup. Our's is to take every match one after the other and let's see how it shapes out in the end." Boboye said.

Bendel Insurance FC began

the 2026 Federation cup in the round of 64 with 2-1 victory over Katsina Utd Junior.

Kayode Oke scored twice to help Bendel Insurance FC come back from a goal down to beat Katsina United Junior at the Area 3 Football pitch in Abuja last week Tuesday evening to progress to the round of 32.

The Benin Arsenal's opponents Crown FC on the other hand beat Cynosure Football Club 2-0 in Anyingba, Kogi on Wednesday last week to advance to the round of 32.

The two teams now face each other in the Round of 32, hoping for a place in the Round of 16 where they will face the winner of just relegated El-Kanemi Warriors of Maiduguri and Akwa United of Uyo.



MIDDLE-BELT TIGERS

Cricket: Middle-Belt Tigers win maiden Nigeria Super League title

Middle-Belt Tigers defeated Southern Sharks by six runs on Saturday to win the maiden Nigeria Super League title.

The match was played at the TBS Cricket Oval, Lagos.

The victory marked a historic moment for the team after a strong run throughout the competition.

The final also concluded the maiden edition of the Nigeria Super League, which featured 20 matches and showcased some of the country's top cricket talents.

The Middle-Belt Tigers won the toss and chose to bat first in the 10-over match.

The team started strongly as Solomon Chilemanya scored 17 runs off seven balls, including two sixes and a four.

Olaleye Elijah added stability in the middle with a composed 21 runs off 14 deliveries.

David Ankrh later added 22 runs off 10 balls, including three sixes, to increase the pressure on the Southern Sharks bowlers.

Eghosa Destiny finished unbeaten on 19 runs as the Middle-Belt Tigers closed on 104 for five, setting Southern Sharks a target of 105 to win.

Southern Sharks began the chase positively and remained in contention.

Pre-WAFCOON friendlies: Madugu calls Ajibade, Oshoala, Nnadozie, 20 others for Senegal

Head Coach Justine Madugu has included captain Rasheedat Ajibade, goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie and veteran forward Asisat Oshoala in his list of 23 players for the upcoming two international friendly matches against the senior women national team of Senegal.

Madugu has also recalled respected midfielder Ngozi Okobi-Okeoghene and forwards Francisca Ordega and Gift Monday, while giving opportunities to Belarus-based Blessing Nkor and Turkey-based midfielder Kafayat Shittu to break into the squad.

There are also home-based goalkeeper Anderline Mgbeci, England-based Rofiat Imuran, Israel-based defender Sikiratu Isah, defender Tosin Demehin, midfielders Halimatu Ayinde and Toni Payne, and forwards Fola-shade Ijamilusi and Joy Omewa.

The trio of Christy Ucheibe, Shukurat Oladipo and Rinsola Babajide who won titles with their clubs in their domestic leagues in the recently-concluded season, are also called.

The Super Falcons will host the senior women's team of Senegal on

Friday, 5th June with a second game between the two teams scheduled for Monday, 8th June. Both matches will take place at the Remo Stars Sports Complex, Ikenne-Remo.

Senegal will play hosts Morocco, Algeria and Kenya in group A of the 2026 Africa Cup of Nations finals taking place 25th July - 16th August, while 10-time champions Nigeria will take on Egypt, Zambia and debutants Malawi in group C.



SUPER FALCONS

Emir plays badminton to preach peace, unity in Southern Kaduna

The Emir of Jema'a, Muhammadu Isa Muhammadu, says sports remain a vital tool for promoting peace, unity, and healthy coexistence among communities in Southern Kaduna.

The traditional ruler stated this on Friday after participating in a badminton game organised as part of activities at the ongoing Southern Kaduna Festival (SKFEST) in Kafanchan.

He said sporting activities

provide opportunities for people from different backgrounds to interact, build friendships, and strengthen social bonds.

According to him, sports also help reduce tension and encourage teamwork among young people and community members.

"I feel honored and delighted to be part of this event. Sports remain one of the strongest tools for promoting peace, unity, friendship, and healthy living among our people," he said.

Muhammadu noted that the Southern Kaduna Festival had continued to serve as a platform for promoting cultural heritage and peaceful coexistence across the region.

He commended the organisers for sustaining initiatives that encourage social harmony and community integration.

The emir said his participation in the badminton game was aimed at demonstrating unity and inclusiveness among the people.

Nigeria fencers face tough test in Abidjan

Nigeria's fencers are set for a major test at the 2026 African Senior Fencing Championships in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from Sunday to Thursday.

The International Fencing Federation-sanctioned event will feature Africa's leading fencers competing in individual and team contests in epee, sabre and foil.

National coach, Ibrahim Alogba, said on Sunday that Nigeria would be represented by a blend of young talents and experienced athletes.

In the men's sabre event, Brou Inkosi, Phoenix Olen and Oluwafolayemi Akinyosoye will spearhead Nigeria's challenge in a highly competitive field.

According to Alogba, the trio

will face formidable opponents, including Tunisia's Fares Ferjani and Egypt's Ahmed Hesham.

Akinyosoye, ranked 65th in the world, enters the competition as Nigeria's highest-ranked athlete.

He was also the country's best-performing fencer at the 2025 championships held in Lagos.

Inkosi, ranked 106th globally, will make his second appearance at the senior championships.

Olen will be making his debut at the continental competition.

In the men's epee category, Diekolola Johnson and Leonard Chizim Aninyei will represent Nigeria.

Adebodunrin Thomas will compete in the women's individual epee event as Nigeria's sole female athlete at the championships.

PSG beat Arsenal on penalties to retain Champions League title



PSG CELEBRATE THEIR CHAMPIONS LEAGUE TITLE

Paris Saint-Germain claimed back-to-back Champions League triumphs with a 4-3 shoot-out win over Arsenal following a 1-1 draw after extra time on Saturday evening with Eberechi Eze and Gabriel missing from the spot.

Mikel Arteta's Premier League champions showed great resilience to take the

game beyond 120 minutes in Budapest, but fell to a second final defeat, 20 years after their first against Barcelona in 2006.

Luis Enrique's side became only the second besides Real Madrid to win the competition in consecutive years in the Champions League era.

"It is even bigger because we knew of the difficulties of play-

ing against Arsenal, and for us as a team and a city it is incredible to win it," Luis Enrique told broadcaster Canal Plus.

PSG's first triumph was 55 years in the making, 14 of those under Qatari ownership, the second could start what they hope is a period of dominance and dynasty-building.

"It was Real Madrid and now

it's us too," PSG midfielder Fabian Ruiz told Movistar.

"They defended all through the game and football is fair... today the right team won."

As soon as the final whistle blew, the Parc des Princes - packed to capacity and where the match was shown on six giant screens - erupted in celebration.

Sports



Super Eagles humble Jamaican national team to win fourth Unity Cup



SUPER EAGLES

The Super Eagles on Saturday defeated Jamaica National Football Team 3-0 in London to win their fourth Unity Cup title.

Midfielder Alhassan Yusuf scored a brace in the third and 91st minutes to help Nigeria successfully defend the title.

Yusuf opened the scoring early in the encounter before Terem Moffi doubled Nigeria's advantage.

Moffi's goal came after Femi Azeez beat his marker and delivered a cross into the penalty area, which the striker converted.

Yusuf sealed the victory in stoppage time when he connected with a pass from Phil

Otele and fired beyond the Jamaican goalkeeper.

The Super Eagles had reached the final after defeating Zimbabwe National Football Team 2-0 in the semi-final.

Femi Azeez scored both goals in the semi-final victory.

The triumph earned Nigeria a fourth Unity Cup title and a second consecutive championship after defeating Jamaica in the previous edition.

The Unity Cup is an annual four-nation international football tournament held in London, featuring countries with large diaspora communities in the United Kingdom.



FRIDAY YOHANNA

Yohanna wins 2026 Mama Eunice Jiya Memorial Golf Tourney in Minna

Friday Yohanna has emerged the Overall Winner of the 2026 Mama Eunice Jiya Memorial Golf Tournament after an impressive performance at the Minna Cantonment Golf Club.

Yohanna, who played off handicap 10, returned 78 gross and 68 net to claim the coveted title at the tournament's ninth edition held on Saturday.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the championship was played in stroke-play format and has evolved from a club match-play competition introduced in 2004.

Speaking after his victory, Yohanna described the achievement as special and dedicated it to his supporters, and tournament organisers.

"I am delighted to emerge overall winner in such a prestigious tournament.

The competition was tough, and I thank God for this memorable victory," he said.

Yohanna commended the organisers for sustaining the championship and preserving the legacy of the late Mama Eunice Jiya through golf development.

"The tournament keeps growing every year. It brings golfers together and promotes friendship, sportsmanship, and healthy competition," he added.

The immediate past Captain of TYB International Golf Resort and Country Club (TYB-IGRCC), Maj.-Gen. S.S. Jiya thanked participants for honouring his late mother.

FIFAU17FWCQ: Nigeria beat Guineans 6-0 to record highest aggregate of 11-0 ● Awaits Benin in Final Hurdle to the World Cup

The Flamingoes of Nigeria (u17 female football team) on Sunday at the Remo Stars Stadium in Ikenne, Ogun State whipped their Guinean counterparts 6-0 after drubbing the Guineans 5-0 in the first leg in Abidjan, Ivory Coast on 23rd May 2026.

Oluwakemi Adegbuyi who scored in Abidjan got a brace (two goals in a match) opening the score sheet in the 9th minute and getting the 2nd goal in the 32nd minute. Captain fantastic, Chidi Harmony who also scored in Abidjan got a brace in the 21st and 34th minute.

The Flamingoes were not tired of pumping up the volume of goals as Queen Joseph scored in the 23rd minute and unstoppable Precious Oscar closed the score sheet for the day with the 6th goal in the 70th minute. Ijebu babes who just finished the highest cultural gig in Africa named OJUDE OBA at Ijebu Ode mocked that Nigeria played Basketball instead of football beating the Guineans 'wotowoto' (a Nigerian slang for whipping).

The Nigerians scored the highest from any team on aggregate in the 2nd round with 11-0 against Guinea; Ghana followed with 8-0 against Liberia and Zambia pushed off Democratic Republic of Congo girls 7-0.

Guinea has appeared in the u17 Afcon final rounds 7 times, made the runners up position in 2019; 3rd in 2015 and 2017. She was at the world cup 8 times and made 4th position in 1985.

Flamingoes were 7 times African champions in 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2022 and 2024 also winning Silver in 2018 all in 9 appearances.

Flamingoes were at the world cup 8 times getting the Bronze in 2022 and appearing at the quarterfinal four times in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2024.

On Friday, Benin girls defeated their Sierra Leonean counterpart 2-2 winning on aggregate of 5-1 after winning the 1st leg at home but now set up a 3rd round show against high scoring Nigeria.



THE FLAMINGOES OF NIGERIA

Okowa hails Nigerian athletes after record-breaking NCAA performances

President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Tonobok Okowa, has praised the outstanding performances of Nigerian athletes at the ongoing NCAA East and West Regionals in the United States.



TONOBOK OKOWA

Okowa, in a statement issued in Lagos, described the athletes' achievements as evidence of Nigeria's growing strength in global athletics.

Leading the list of standout performers was sprint sensation Kanyinsola Ajayi of Au-

burn University.

Ajayi clocked a world-leading 9.84 seconds in the men's 100 metres.

The remarkable feat saw him break the Nigerian record of 9.85 seconds set by Olusoji Fasuba in 2006.

Okowa also commended Samuel Ogazi of the University of Alabama for his impressive performance in the men's 400 metres.

Ogazi ran a sensational 43.82 seconds to establish a new personal best.

The performance also propelled him to the top of the world rankings for the season.

Reacting to the performances, Okowa expressed delight at the growing influence of Nigerian athletes within the United States collegiate athletics system.

Cricket: Winners emerge in Ebonyi South secondary school cricket championship

Government Secondary School (GSS), Afikpo and Sir Francis Ibiam Grammar School, Afikpo, have emerged champions of the Ebonyi Secondary School Cricket Championship in the male and female categories respectively.

The championship was organised by the Ebonyi chapter of the Sports Writers Association

of Nigeria, in conjunction with the Ebonyi Cricket Association.

The competition is being held across the three senatorial districts of Ebonyi to discover and develop young cricket talents.

Technical Officer for the Ebonyi South series, Ebi Agha, disclosed the results while

speaking with newsmen on Saturday.

Agha said GSS Afikpo defeated Amuro Mgbom Secondary School, Afikpo, to emerge winner of the male category.

He noted that both schools were the only male teams in the district competition.

According to him, GSS Afikpo will represent Ebonyi South

in the male category of the state finals.

Agha said Sir Francis Ibiam Grammar School won the female category after defeating Holy Child Secondary School and Amuro Mgbom Secondary School.

He said the school defeated Holy Child by nine wickets and Amuro Mgbom by 13 runs.

Grange, St Saviour's retain Dolphin swimming league crowns

Grange School and St Saviour's School have retained their dominance at the Season 7 Dolphin Swimming League Awards, again emerging as the country's best-performing schools.

The awards ceremony was held on Sunday in Ikoyi, Lagos.

The event celebrated outstanding swimmers, with Meadow Hall School's Naetochukwu Oguegbu and Grange School's Aidan Dumuje-Abili and Oluwatofunmi Ibidapo winning Most Valuable Player awards.

Oguegbu was among the season's standout performers, winning 15 gold medals.

His achievements earned him the Best Male Swimmer award alongside Dumuje-Abi-

li, one of the league's most consistent performers.

The performances of both swimmers have raised expectations for a promising new generation of Nigerian swimming talent.

For the second consecutive year, Ibidapo won the Best Female Swimmer award after securing 14 gold medals and one silver medal.

Ibidapo said retaining the title demanded greater commitment and determination.

"After winning last year, I knew I had to work harder to keep the title.

"With the support of my parents, I was able to achieve it. Next season, I hope to make it three in a row through more dedication and hard work," she said.



DOLPHIN SWIMMING



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13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975

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FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279	
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
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FEATURE



The role of society in shaping children's future

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

It is widely believed that the responsibility of training and nurturing a child rests solely with parents. This belief is understandable. Parents are the ones who bring children into the world, feed them, clothe them, and make the first sacrifices. Yet, many people fail to realize that parents do not raise children in isolation. Other forces in society — visible and invisible — also shape a child's future, either directly or indirectly, for good or for ill.

Society, defined as a large organized group of people living together in a shared territory and interacting through social relationships, is the wider classroom in which every child learns. Whether a child grows into a responsible, productive adult or becomes a burden and nuisance to society depends largely on the environment in which they are raised. The home may lay the foundation, but society builds the structure.

The role of society in shaping children's future can produce positive or negative outcomes. This raises an important question: What are the major influences in society that shape children's destiny? And more importantly, what must we do collectively to ensure that the next generation becomes an asset, not a liability?

This essay examines those influences — family, education, peer groups, media and technology, government, religion, culture — and argues that raising children is a shared responsibility. It will take a whole village, a whole nation, to raise children who will build, not break, the society of tomorrow.

THE FAMILY: THE FIRST AND MOST ENDURING INFLUENCE

Charity begins at home, and so does character. The family is a child's first school. Long before a child enters a classroom, they have learned how to speak, how to greet elders, how to manage anger, and how to treat others. These lessons are taught not only through words, but through daily observation.

Children are natural imitators. A boy who watches his father beat his mother will learn that violence solves problems. A girl who sees her mother speak respectfully to neighbors will learn courtesy. A child whose parents read books at home will grow up believing that reading is normal. As the African proverb says, "The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth." The first embrace must come from the home.

Unfortunately, many Nigerian homes today are under pressure. Economic hardship, migration, and long working hours mean that some parents are physically absent. Others are present but emotionally unavailable. Children raised by irresponsible, abusive, or negligent parents often struggle with trust, discipline, and self-

worth. They may find it hard to take responsibility later in life because they never saw it modeled at home.

But the family's role goes beyond biology. Extended family, step-parents, guardians, and even foster caregivers all contribute. In Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa traditions, aunts, uncles, and grandparents were co-teachers. That communal parenting is weakening in cities, yet it remains powerful. When a child has multiple positive adult role models, they have a safety net. When that net is torn, society must step in.

EDUCATION: THE BRIDGE TO OPPORTUNITY

If the family lays the foundation, education builds the bridge to the future. Schools are not just places to learn mathematics and English. They are institutions where children learn discipline, teamwork, critical thinking, and citizenship.

A good teacher can change the trajectory of a child's life. I have seen students in rural Edo State who discovered their passion for science because one teacher stayed after class to explain concepts. I have seen girls in Katsina choose engineering because a female teacher told them, "Your brain is not limited by your gender." Teachers are nation-builders in plain clothes.

However, education in Nigeria faces serious challenges. Over 10.5 million children are out of school. In Katsina, 300 schools remain closed due to banditry. In Rivers, 4000 primary schools were empty in May 2026 because teachers protested unpaid salaries. When schools are shut, children do not just lose lessons; they lose hope. Idleness becomes the classroom, and the streets become the teacher.

Quality matters as much as access. Overcrowded classrooms with 90 pupils and one teacher, as seen in Ekiador Primary School before SUBEB's intervention, cannot produce critical thinkers. Poorly paid, unmotivated teachers cannot inspire excellence.

Government must prioritize funding, teacher training, and security in schools. But society also has a role. Communities can build classrooms, parents can form PTAs that hold schools accountable, and alumni can fund scholarships. Education is too important to be left to government alone.

PEER GROUPS: THE POWER OF "SHOW ME YOUR FRIENDS"

The Bible says, "He that walketh with the wise shall be wise." Peer influence is perhaps the strongest force on adolescents. Between ages 10 and 19, children spend more time with friends than with parents. Friends shape their language, dress, values, and choices.

Purpose-driven friends motivate each other to study, start businesses, and avoid trouble. In Jos, Plateau State, groups of youths registered together for the "Plateau Digital Upskill" program because they saw their

friends doing it. That peer pressure was positive.

But bad company corrupts good morals. Children who keep company with drug users, cultists, or internet fraudsters are more likely to copy those behaviors. In Lagos, many young boys were recruited into gangs simply because their friends were members. The desire to belong is powerful.

Parents cannot choose their children's friends forever, but they can teach discernment. Schools can create clubs, sports teams, and mentorship programs that connect children with positive peers. Communities can organize youth centers where talent, not crime, earns respect. Society must give children better options for belonging.

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY: THE NEW GLOBAL CLASSROOM

Never before has a generation grown up with so much information at their fingertips. Social media, television, YouTube, TikTok, and the internet have become powerful teachers. A child in a village with a smartphone can learn coding from MIT or watch harmful content from anonymous creators.

Media has a dual influence. Positive content can educate, inspire, and connect. During COVID-19 lockdowns, Nigerian children learned from online classes. Today, YouTube tutorials are teaching carpentry, makeup artistry, and computer skills to youths who cannot afford formal training.

But harmful content is also viral. Pornography, violence, cyberbullying, and get-rich-quick fraud schemes are everywhere. Algorithms push sensational content because it gets clicks. A 12-year-old who spends hours on TikTok may begin to believe that fame and money come without hard work or integrity.

This is where society must act. Parents must monitor and guide, not just ban. Media platforms must regulate harmful material and promote educational content. Government agencies like NITDA and NBC must enforce standards without killing innovation. Most importantly, schools must teach digital literacy — how to search, verify, and use technology responsibly. A child who understands media will not be controlled by it.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES: THE ARCHITECTURE OF OPPORTUNITY

Government is society organized. Its policies create the environment in which children grow. When government builds roads, children can get to school. When it funds primary healthcare, children survive diseases. When it creates jobs, parents can afford school fees.

Recent FAAC allocations of N1.1 trillion to states give governments the resources to invest. In Kano, the state government's distribution of 2000 solar irrigation pumps shows how

policy can directly improve children's nutrition and their parents' income. In Sokoto, the 10MW solar plant powers 20 villages where children can now study at night.

But policy failures also shape children's futures. When primary teachers are owed 5 months' salaries, as in Rivers, children lose learning time. When 300 schools are closed in Katsina due to insecurity, government policy has failed to protect the right to education.

Children cannot vote, but they are the most affected by policy. Therefore, society must demand child-friendly budgets, transparency, and accountability. Civil society, religious leaders, and the media must ask: How much of FAAC is going to schools, clinics, and child protection?

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS: THE MORAL COMPASS

Religion and culture are society's moral language. In Nigeria, churches, mosques, and traditional institutions have always taught values: honesty, hard work, respect for elders, and care for the weak.

A good pastor or imam can reach a child when parents cannot. Community leaders can settle disputes and protect children from abuse. Cultural festivals, proverbs, and storytelling pass on wisdom. The Yoruba proverb "Omoluabi" teaches character. The Igbo concept of "Ife onye metara" teaches personal responsibility.

But when religious and cultural leaders are silent on corruption, abuse, or injustice, children learn that morality is optional. When culture promotes child marriage or discrimination against the girl-child, it limits potential.

Religious and community leaders must therefore be intentional. Sermons should address bullying, drug abuse, and online safety, not just heaven and hell. Traditional rulers should protect children's rights and speak against harmful practices. Communities should create safe spaces where children can report abuse without fear.

THE COST OF NEGLECT: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOCIETY FAILS

When children grow up in a negative environment, the consequences are predictable and painful.

Academically, they perform poorly. A child who sleeps on a classroom floor and treks 12km daily, like Destiny Osamede in Edo, may pass WAEC through sheer grit, but many others drop out.

Health-wise, they suffer. Malnutrition, early pregnancy, and mental health issues are rising. UN OCHA warns that 35 million Nigerians face acute hunger by August 2026. Hungry children cannot concentrate.

Socially, they become vulnerable. Juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, and cybercrime increase. A child who feels rejected by family, school, and society will seek belonging in gangs or fraud

networks.

Nationally, the cost is huge. Insecurity costs Nigeria \$18 billion yearly. Every child lost to illiteracy or crime is a lost engineer, doctor, or entrepreneur. The future of society is literally being wasted.

THE WAY FORWARD: RAISING CHILDREN AS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

If children are the future, then raising them must be everyone's business. Parents must spend quality time with their children, not just money. A 15-minute conversation at dinner can prevent years of delinquency.

Schools must go beyond exams. They should teach values, emotional intelligence, and skills for the 21st century. Teachers should be trained and paid well.

Media platforms must balance profit with responsibility. They should promote content that educates and uplifts, while regulating harmful material. Parents and schools must teach children to be critical consumers, not passive scrollers.

Communities must protect children's rights. Neighbors should speak up against abuse. Traditional rulers should create child protection committees. Youths should mentor younger ones.

Government must make education accessible, affordable, and secure. Budgets should prioritize children. Security agencies must protect schools. Policies should support families, not just corporations.

Most importantly, society must change its mindset. Raising children is not "women's work" or "parents' problem." It is national security. It is economic policy. It is the definition of development.

CONCLUSION: SOCIETY REAPS WHAT IT SOWS

Just as a seed produces the harvest, children are the future of society. The child who grows up loved, educated, and guided will become a builder. The child who grows up neglected, hungry, and angry will become a destroyer.

Nigeria's \$1 trillion economy dream will not be achieved by oil alone. It will be achieved by the character, skills, and dreams of our children. Destiny Osamede, who reads by torchlight, and Youssef, the refugee boy who wants to be a doctor like his mother, are the real measure of our development.

Therefore, society must invest deliberately, consistently, and collectively in raising responsible, morally upright, and educated children. The home must do its part. The school must do its part. The media must do its part. Government must do its part. The community must do its part.

The future of every child reflects the condition of the society in which they grow up. If we want a better Nigeria in 2040, we must raise better children in 2026. It takes a village. It takes a nation. And the time to start is now.