

FG flags off construction of N1.245trn Gombe-Biu Highway

GOMBE

Former Senate Leader and Senator representing Borno South, Ali Ndume, has hailed President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's commitment to the reconstruction and dualisation of the strategic Gombe-Biu highway, describing the project as a fulfilment of Tinubu's promise and a major breakthrough capable of transforming the economic fortunes of the Northeast.

Speaking at the commencement of work on the 125-kilometre road project, valued at N1.245 trillion, Ndume said the projects demonstrates the Tinubu administration's determination to addressing long-standing infrastructure deficits in the region.

In a statement personally signed by the Borno South lawmaker, he commended both President Tinubu and Works Minister, Sen. David Umahi, for redeeming their commit-

ment to rehabilitate one of the region's most critical highways, which has suffered years of neglect despite repeated appeals by stakeholders.

According to him, the project that was officially flagged off on Thursday at Liji in Gombe the State during a ceremony attended by Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, Minister of Works David Umahi, and Managing Director of Hi-Tech Construction Company, Danny Abboud, marked the culmina-

tion of years of advocacy aimed at drawing federal attention to the deplorable state of the road.

He recalled that he had engaged then Minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fas-hola, as far back as 2019 on the urgent need to rehabilitate the road in view of its importance to economic growth, security operations, and regional integration.

The senator also revealed that he renewed the campaign in 2021 during discussions on infrastructure financing frame-

works and projects linked to facilities supported by the African Development Bank, urging authorities to prioritise the Biu-Gombe corridor in national development plans.

Ndume said his persistence eventually paid off after he formally wrote to the Minister of Works on February 11, 2026, drawing attention to the exclusion of the Biu-Damboa-Maiduguri axis from the administration's legacy road projects.

"It is heartwarming that our

engagements with the present Minister of Works eventually yielded results," he said.

He noted that the Federal Executive Council subsequently approved the road project under the federal tax credit and infrastructure intervention framework and later included it among strategic national road interventions funded through the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC)

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That The People May Know

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Okpebholo calls for prayer amid national challenges

● Says Nigeria does not belong to kidnappers

BENIN

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo says Nigerians should continually seek God's face to overcome the current insecurity across the country.

Okpebholo made the state-

ment on Sunday during a visit to LoveWorld City (Christ Embassy) in Benin City, where he requested prayers against kidnapping, cultism, and other security challenges.

He also called for prayers for peace, prosperity, good governance, and economic recov-

ery in Nigeria.

The governor further urged the congregation to pray for President Bola Tinubu, asking God to grant him wisdom, guidance, and strength to lead the nation and manage its economy effectively.

Expressing confidence in the

power of prayer, Okpebholo said Nigeria would overcome its current challenges.

"This country does not belong to kidnappers. No individual or group should hold the nation captive for personal or political interests," he said.

"As elections draw clos-

er, kidnapping has become a growing concern. However, with the prayers of God's people and collective efforts, we believe these challenges will be overcome," he added.

He added that prayers for Nigeria would naturally extend to the safety and well-being of Edo State and other parts of the country.

The officiating pastor, Moses Olayemi, led the congregation in prayers for Nigeria, its leaders, local government areas, the economy, and communities.

He prayed for divine peace, protection, economic restora-

tion, and spiritual awakening across Edo State and the nation.

Pastor Olayemi also commended Governor Okpebholo for the ongoing developmental projects in Edo State, particularly improvements in road infrastructure.

"We appreciate the transformation taking place across the state. The roads and other projects are improving daily, and we commend your efforts.

"May God grant you the resources and strength to complete what you have started," he said.



PROJECTS INSPECTION:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, during inspection of some projects in Edo Central Senatorial District at the weekend.

...Edo residents relish gov's developmental strides

RICHARD EWEKA

UDOMI

Residents of Udomi and neighbouring communities in Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State, on Saturday, were all praises for the developmental strides of the State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, as he inspected on-going projects.

The residents, who trooped out in their numbers, hailed the construction of a 150-bed space Edo Specialist Hospital, hostel accommodation, school of nursing building and Udomi Holiday Resort Centre.

As part of their solidarity to the governor, the excited residents prayed that God should continue to protect Gov. Okpebholo for his

administration's laudable projects spread across Edo.

In a chat with newsmen, one of the residents, Mrs Theresa Ehimentafor, commended the governor for bringing development to Udomi community, adding that the first time community will experience such transformation.

"The development brought into our community by our governor are commendable, we are proud of him, and we are going to reward him by voting for him to complete his eight years in office", she said.

Another resident, Mr Akhere Okosun, explained that the community is experiencing massive development since it's

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Tirade against Edo Scouts' visit: Edo Gov's spokesman tackle Arise Tv on-air persons —Pg 2

NANS begins nationwide probe of abandoned TETFund projects —Pg 7

Huge crowds throng Madrid streets for Pope's open-air Mass —Pg 8

Commonwealth Games: Olopade assures Team Nigeria of strong support —Pg 13

NEWS

TIRADE AGAINST EDO SCOUTS' VISIT

Edo Gov's spokesman tackle *Arise Tv* on-air persons

BEBNIN CITY

Some on-air persons of the *Arise Television* have been accused of creating the wrong impression that the visit of a contingent of Edo Scouts to Ramat Park flyover was more than an excursion following the media practitioners' direct attack on the young scouts and the state government.

The Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State, Dr. Patrick Akhere Ebojele, made the accusation in a response to the tirade of the on-air persons in the *Arise Television* during the segment tagged 'Videos Trending' around the world.

In a statement titled, "Edo Scout Visit to Flyover highlights value of civic learning and nothing else," Dr. Ebojele declared the criticism of the visit by members of the Scout Association to the newly completed Ramat Park

Flyover in Benin City by some on-air persons on *AriseTV* displayed complete ignorance about civic education, youth development, and public appreciation of infrastructure projects.

The governor's spokesman frowned that the criticism suggested that the tour of the flyover in Benin City, the Edo State capital, by young Scouts who live in Edo State, was unworthy of recognition, adding that it portrayed the exercise as an embarrassing celebration of a routine public project.

Such views, he further stated, overlooked the educational purpose and broader significance of the visit "because, for one, flyovers are not routine public projects. This particular flyover is the first in Edo State."

He maintained that the tirade against the young scouts in Edo went far beyond the bounds of legitimate criticism, saying "the critics were un-

ware that the Scout Movement is built on principles of character development, leadership, community engagement, and practical learning.

"There is no way they would have known that the visit to the

Ramat Park Flyover provided an opportunity for young people to witness firsthand a major infrastructure project within their city and understand how public investments affect everyday life."

He told the *Arise Tv* on-air

persons that the scouts' visit was learning by experience, which remains one of the most effective methods of education.

His words: "Rather than learning about governance and development only through

textbooks, TV, movies and on-line, the Scouts were able to see a first hand, a completed project designed to improve transportation, ease traffic congestion, and enhance mobility within Benin City.

Insecurity: Army rescues 360 abducted women, children in Gwoza

MAIDUGURI

The Nigerian Army troops of Operation Hadin Kai, in conjunction with Special Operations Forces, have rescued the 360 civilians, mainly women and children, abducted by terrorists from Ngoshe community in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno.

Maj.-Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, Theatre Commander of the North East Joint Task Force Operation Hadin Kai, who made this known, said the success followed a coordinated special operation conducted on June 6 across multiple fronts around the Mandara Mountains.

According to him, Special Operations Forces initially carried out preliminary missions that created confusion within terrorist camps, paving the way for ground troops of the 26 Task Force Brigade to extract

the captives successfully

"The rescued civilians were among residents abducted during a terrorist attack on Ngoshe community on March 3, 2026.

"However, the operation recorded a tragic setback as two infants died during the rescue effort due to the harsh and difficult terrain encountered while moving the victims to safety," he said.

He added that all rescued persons underwent immediate medical screening upon arrival, while those requiring urgent medical attention were stabilised by brigade medical personnel and admitted to the General Hospital in Gwoza for treatment.

"The victims were also provided with food and water before being moved to a secure holding facility pending their handover to relevant authorities and reunification with their families," he said.

Gov. Okpebholo appoints Dr. Washington Osifo as Commissioner designate

BENIN CITY

The Executive Governor of Edo State, His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the nomination of Hon. Dr. Washington Osa Osifo as a Commissioner-Designate for Edo State.

This was disclosed by Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq. Secretary to the State Government in a statement issued in Benin city at the weekend

"Hon. Dr. Washington Osa Osifo is an accomplished lawyer, administrator and politician of repute. He holds degrees in Law, Political Science

and Public Administration, as well as Comparative Politics and Development. He previously served as a Commissioner in Edo State in various capacities and at different times.

"With extensive academic credentials and years of governance experience, he is widely recognised for his commitment to community development, good governance and political leadership in Edo State.

"The nomination of Hon. Dr. Washington Osa Osifo will be forwarded to the Edo State House of Assembly for consideration and confirmation," the statement added



PROGRESS REPORT:

L-R: Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Tunji Disu; Deputy Senate President Jibrin Barau; Chief of Staff to the President, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabamila, and Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives Benjamin Kalu, after a meeting on establishing state police, in Abuja.

Multi-dimensional efforts underway to rescue abducted ex-General, wife

KATSINA

The prospects are bright for the release of former Director of Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Rabe Abubakar (rtd), and his wife, following intensified multi-dimensional efforts to secure their freedom, Katsina State Government has disclosed.

The government, in a statement issued on Saturday by the Commissioner for Information and Culture, Dr Bala Salisu-Zango, in Katsina, said coordinated security operations have reached an advanced stage, raising optimism that the retired military officer and his wife will soon regain their freedom.

Salisu-Zango said the Sate Governor, Umaru Dikko Radda, had since directed all relevant security agencies in the state to prioritize the safe rescue of Abubakar and his wife who were abducted by suspected bandits along Matazu Local Area of the state and other victims held by criminal groups.

He revealed that preliminary investigations showed the abduction was a deliberate, targeted operation.

According to him, evidence gathered so far suggests the retired general and his wife were monitored and trailed from Kaduna, where they reportedly began their journey before the incident.

"The targeted nature of the

crime points to a disturbing shift in the tactics of criminal elements operating in the region.

"The precision with which the operation was carried out indicates the involvement of organised criminal networks, and this insight is guiding ongoing rescue efforts," he added.

The commissioner described the attack as an affront not only to retired servicemen who had devoted their lives to national service but also to all law-abiding citizens.

He reiterated the state's commitment to ensuring that those behind the abduction were identified and brought to justice.

"We are dealing with a targeted operation, which changes the dynamics of our response.

"The state is working around

the clock, deploying technology, intelligence gathering, and coordinated field operations to close in on the abductors.

"Our primary objective remains the safe return of the general, his wife, and others in similar situations," he said.

Salisu-Zango said the state government had strengthened collaboration with the Nigerian Army, the Police, and other security and intelligence agencies to ensure a breakthrough without jeopardising the victims' safety.

The commissioner appealed to members of the public to provide any useful information on suspicious movements or activities linked to the incident, saying such intelligence could help dismantle the criminal network responsible.

Police rescue Adelabu's sister, twin sons

IBADAN

The Nigeria Police Force has confirmed the successful rescue of Mrs Busayo Adelabu-John Paul and her 12-year-old twin sons, Peter and Paul, who were abducted on June 3 in Ibadan, Oyo State.

The Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO), Abuja, DCP Anthony Placid, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday.

Placid said that the hostages were rescued during a coordinated operation by the Force Intelligence Department Intel-

ligence Response Team (FID-IRT) in Ibadan at approximately 7.30 p.m. on Saturday.

He added that the rescue was achieved through sustained intelligence gathering, surveillance, and tactical operations.

These efforts, he said, enabled investigators to track the kidnappers' movements, resulting in a confrontation with FID-IRT operatives.

"During the confrontation, two suspected kidnappers were fatally wounded and two rifles were recovered.

"The victims were rescued

unharmful and are now in safe custody, receiving medical care and support," he said.

Placid said that the Inspector-General of Police (I-G), Tunji Disu, commended the courage, professionalism, and effectiveness of the FID-IRT operatives and all officers involved.

According to him, their resilience and commitment were instrumental in the safe rescue of the hostages.

"Security operatives have intensified efforts in the area to apprehend fleeing members of the kidnapping syndicate.

"Preliminary intelligence indicates that some suspects escaped with gunshot injuries.

"Operations are ongoing to track, arrest, and bring all involved to justice. The Nigeria Police Force appreciates the public's support, cooperation, and patience during the operation.

"We remain committed to combating violent crime, protecting lives and property, and ensuring the safety of all citizens," he said.

Mrs Adelabu John-Paul, a younger sister the immediate past Minister of Power, and her twin sons were kidnapped in the early hours of June 3 in Ibadan.

NEWS

Farmers lament \$2.34m import bill, seek improved farm security

LAGOS

Local farmers and agricultural experts have attributed Nigeria's growing dependence on food imports to insecurity in farming communities, calling on the government

to prioritise the safety of farmlands and rural communities.

They spoke in separate interviews with newsmen on Sunday in Lagos while reacting to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria, that food imports stood at \$2.34 million in 2025.

The General Secretary of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Mr Femi Oke, described

the country's increasing reliance on imported food as discouraging to local farmers.

Oke said food commodities that could be produced locally should not be imported, noting that such a trend undermined efforts to boost domestic agricultural production.

"As an association, we are not happy about the constant im-

portation of food into the country, especially commodities that can be produced locally.

"We believe only a few products, such as dairy items that require specialised storage facilities, may justify importation.

"Continuous importation of food that should be grown locally discourages farmers and weakens efforts to achieve food security.

"We have consistently urged the government to discourage excessive food imports and empower local farmers to increase production," he said.

According to him, Nigeria should not depend on external sources for food if it is serious about attaining food security.

Also speaking, an agricultural communication expert, Dr Ismail Olawale, said sustainable agricultural development required more than increased budgetary allocations.

According to him, issues such as rural development, security, logistics and infrastructure are critical to achieving food security.

"We need to stop paying lip service to agricultural development. Sustainable growth in the sector goes beyond budgetary allocations.

"Many rural communities that produce food are underdeveloped and increasingly vulnerable to attacks by bandits and other criminal elements.

"The government must develop strong security networks and surveillance systems while ensuring that roads connecting farms to markets are accessible and safe," he said.

Olawale noted that focusing solely on agricultural budgets without addressing insecurity and poor infrastructure would yield limited results.

He added that agricultural development required a ho-

listic approach encompassing security, transportation, education and social development.

"Food importation is not a sustainable solution to food security.

"When agriculture works, it stimulates improvements in security, logistics and other sectors because they are interconnected," he said.

Similarly, the National Publicity Secretary of the Poultry Association of Nigeria, Mr Godwin Egbebe, said insecurity had forced many farmers to abandon farming and migrate to urban areas in search of alternative livelihoods.

Egbebe said the development had reduced food production and increased the country's dependence on imported food.

"The best way to reduce food imports and achieve food security is to address insecurity on our farms.

"Many farmers have left agriculture because of safety concerns, resulting in lower food production.

"Injecting billions of Naira into the sector will achieve little if farmers cannot safely access their farmlands," he said.

The stakeholders urged government to strengthen security in farming communities, improve rural infrastructure and create an enabling environment for farmers to boost local food production and reduce dependence on imports.

**JUMAT PRAYER:**

Vice President Kashim Shettima (4th right), during Friday Jum'at prayer.

Patients lament shortage of staff, drugs in Ondo, Osun, Ekiti hospitals

AKURE

Patients across public hospitals in Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States are facing severe healthcare disruptions due to staff shortages and lack of essential drugs.

A cross section of the patients, who spoke in an interview with our correspondents, said shortages of health workers and drugs were affecting medical services in hospitals across the three states.

They appealed to their respective state government to tackle severe manpower shortages and high medication costs in order to save more lives.

Mr Julius Adegoroye, a patient at the Ondo State Specialist Hospital, Okitipupa, said the hospital

is facing a severe workforce crisis, rendering the patients vulnerable.

"How can few doctors and nurses be attending to lots of patients, many of the patients are in serious pains and needed attention but shortage of health workers is affecting their services," he said.

Mrs Iyabo Akinugba, another patient, lamented that the rising cost of medications outside hospitals is a major crisis which often led to an increase in non-adherence, worsened health conditions, and in some tragic cases, fatalities.

"After attending to you, they ask you to buy drugs from pharmacies outside the hospital which is very expensive and this is really taking a toll on patients.

"This is government hospital and this is the place for common man. Although nobody prays to

be sick but it's inevitable, I appeal to government to restore this facility back to its former years for citizens to enjoy its free healthcare services," she said.

Similarly in Osogbo, an elderly woman, Mrs Abibatu Igbalaye, who was at the maternity ward of the Osun State General Hospital, Asubiaro, to support her daughter after childbirth, commended the hospital for providing free healthcare services.

Igbalaye, however, noted that patients were required to provide delivery kits and other consumables used during treatment.

A medical practitioner, Dr Ayorinde Adewale, identified the acute shortage of health professionals in the general hospitals as a major challenge in the sector.

According to him, many specialist doctors, including neurosurgeons, cardiologists,

and oncologists, have left the country due to poor remuneration and conditions of service.

He warned that the remaining doctors were overworked and underpaid, adding that the trend could discourage professionals from working in public hospitals.

A patient at the Osun State University Teaching Hospital, Mrs Kabirat Alabi, said the hospital continued to improve its services and provide quality healthcare.

Alabi emphasised the need for sustained commitment to global best practices in healthcare delivery in the state.

The Public Relations Officer, Osun State University Teaching Hospital, Mrs Abimbola Idowu, stated that the hospital was performing well in healthcare delivery through improved facilities, skilled personnel, and patient-centred care.

EMR congratulates Alenkhe on appointment as Acting Managing Director of EBS

BENIN CITY

The Energy and Maritime Reporters Association of Nigeria (EMR), Edo State Chapter, have congratulated the Chairman of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Comrade Festus Alenkhe, on his appointment as the Acting Managing Director of Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS).

Comrade Alenkhe was recently appointed by the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, to head the state-owned radio and television broadcasting organization, a development that has been widely applauded by media practitioners and stakeholders within and outside Edo State.

In a congratulatory statement jointly signed by the Chairman and Secretary of EMR Edo State Chapter, Comrades Andrew Ohwobetehe and Francis Ogbuagu respectively, the association described the appointment as well-deserved and a clear demonstration of the governor's commitment to excellence, competence, and professionalism in public service.

The association noted that Comrade Festus Alenkhe has over the years distinguished himself as an accomplished journalist, exemplary union leader, and astute administrator whose dedication to the growth and development of the media profes-

sion remains unparalleled.

According to the statement, the appointment amounts to "putting a square peg in a square hole," considering Alenkhe's vast experience, leadership qualities, and remarkable contributions to journalism and media management.

THE STATEMENT READS IN PART:

"We, members of the Energy and Maritime Reporters Association of Nigeria (EMR), Edo State Chapter, heartily congratulate the newly appointed Acting Managing Director of Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS) and Chairman of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Comrade Festus Alenkhe, on his well-deserved appointment.

"This appointment is a testament to his years of dedication, hard work, integrity, and outstanding service to the journalism profession. We commend the Executive Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for making this strategic appointment and for placing a capable and experienced professional at the helm of the state's broadcasting service.

"Comrade Festus Alenkhe is a thoroughbred journalist and administrator who has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to excellence. His wealth of experience in journalism, media administration, and unionism makes him eminently qualified for the position.

EWMB unveils academy to boost waste management and environmental sanitation in Edo

FRANCA OSAGIE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Waste Management Board has launched the EWMB Academy as part of efforts to build on recent progress and deepen behavioural change around waste management.

Described as a bold statement of the Governor Monday Okpebholo's Administration's commitment to sustainability, the academy was officially unveiled June 4 in Benin City.

The Director of Administration and Supply, EWMB, Mr. Idiaghe Osagie, delivered the opening address on behalf of the Managing Director, Dr. Lucky Enehita-Inegbenehi. He said the launch represents another major milestone in the Board's innovative and transformational agenda.

According to him, the Board has overhauled waste evacuation by introducing 24-hour operations. He added that monitoring and surveillance programmes in key hubs such as markets and

commercial districts have kept those areas clean and safe for traders and customers.

Dr. Enehita-Inegbenehi noted that the Board's operations have been strengthened by modern waste management facilities provided under Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration. These include new bulldozers, pay loaders, dump trucks, and low bed trailers.

He explained that the Board is moving beyond basic refuse collection. It is now driving "waste-to-wealth" initiatives, combating

plastic pollution in communities, and laying the foundation for a circular economy.

The MD further stated that the academy reflects the Board's forward-thinking vision to advance proper waste management and environmental sanitation through education, training, and community engagement. He expressed confidence that the academy will equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, discipline, and sense of responsibility needed to build a cleaner and healthier society.

Alleged N36m fraud: EFCC begins trial of *tiktok* influencer Blessing CEO

LAGOS

The trial of the self-styled relationship expert, Nkeiruka Okoro, a.k.a. Blessing CEO, over an alleged N36 million fraud, commenced on Friday at a Federal High Court in Lagos.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has arraigned the defendant in May before Justice Isaac Dipeolu on a two-count charge bordering on obtaining N36 million by false pretence and stealing.

She had however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

It would be recalled that at

the last adjourned date, defence counsel, Mr N.I. Nwafor, informed the court that the defendant had refunded part of the money to the complainant as part of a settlement deal.

However, the prosecutor, Mr Suleiman Suleiman, argued that the Federal Government was the complainant in the case, adding that the prosecution was not privy to any settlement arrangement.

The court subsequently adjourned the case for trial until June 5.

At the resumed hearing on Friday, the prosecutor called the first prosecution witness,

Mrs Bufo Okangbe, an investigator with the anti-graft agency, and sought to tender some documents through her.

The documents included; a statement of the defendant, copy of a lease agreement, as well as bank documents from Access and Guaranty Trust banks respectively, among others.

Citing provisions such as sections 84, 89 and 90 of the Evidence Act, defence counsel raised objections to tendering of the lease agreement, which he argued, was a photocopy.

He also objected to tendering of the defendant's state-

ment on the grounds that it was not endorsed in the presence of a legal practitioner.

Defence counsel also objected to tendering of the bank documents, saying it was not a certified copy.

In response, the prosecution also cited relevant provisions of the Evidence Act, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, as well as judicial authorities, arguing that, admissibility of a document was governed by relevance.

In a short ruling, the court overruled the objection by the defence counsel, and admitted and marked the documents as exhibits respectively.

Leading the witness in evidence, the witness told the court that in her statement, the defendant admitted receiving payments from the nominal complainant, one Ifeyinwa Okoye.

The witness told the court that in her statement, the defendant admitted receiving payments from the nominal complainant, one Ifeyinwa Okoye.

She told the court that in July 2024, the defendant received payments in the sum of N25 million in her Guaranty Trust Bank account and later, an additional N11 million in her Access bank account, in furtherance of a lease.

On the disbursement of the said funds, the witness told the court that on receipt of the money, the defendant made a transfer of N8 million to one Thomas Osogun and Jumoke Osogun, in July 2024.

She told the court that the defendant also made a payment of N9 million, N900,000 and N2 million respectively, to her mother, Mrs Lina Okoro and also transferred the sum of N10 million to one Kenneth Onuora.

According to her, the defendant also made payment of N1.9 million to one De Beauty City by Lekki.

Board sensitises Christians on pilgrimage to Jerusalem

LAGOS

The Lagos State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board has urged Christians to embrace pilgrimage to Jerusalem, describing it as a pathway to spiritual growth and deeper faith.

A four - man - team led by the board's Secretary, Dr Gbolabo Okudero, gave the advice on Sunday during a visit to St. Luke's Anglican Church, Amje in the Diocese of Lagos West.

Okudero said the pilgrimage opportunity was open to church groups, public servants, corporate organisations and members of the public, with participation fee of N3.2 million.

He urged Christians to continually pray for the peace of Jerusalem and make intercessions for end to the tension in the region.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and prepare your

hearts and offices for a season of spiritual opening, mission and organised visits to the holy land," he said.

According to him, preparations are ongoing for pilgrimage to Israel and Jordan, with daily coordination efforts aimed at ensuring smooth and successful pilgrimage.

"We must intercede for God to avert or restrain war rather than wait until the end of conflict before seeking divine intervention.

"Let's visit Jerusalem; your certified spiritual growth is our priority.

"Commit to regular prayers, support preparations and consider participating in pilgrimage," he said.

The presiding priest of the church, Ven. Moses Akinlola, commended the sensitisation initiative, and thanked the visitors, while offered prayers for the success of the programme.

FG flags off construction of N1.245trn...

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tax liabilities arrangement.

Describing the highway as a lifeline for the Northeast, Ndume said the project would significantly improve transportation, facilitate trade, boost security operations, and strengthen economic ties between the region and neighbouring countries.

"This road is not just about transportation. It is a strategic

economic and social corridor that connects the Northeast to other parts of Nigeria and to neighbouring West African countries," he said.

The N1.245 trillion highway project, he said, is expected to be one of the largest ongoing federal road interventions in the Northeast, with stakeholders expressing hope that it will open up new economic opportunities and accelerate development across the region.

...Edo residents relish gov's...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

inception, adding that the people are amazed by the projects spread around the community.

"This is the first time our community is having a teaching hospital, this is the first time we are having an army base, this is the first time our community is having Udomi holiday resort center, we are happy to see all these projects being executed by our governor", he said.

Also speaking, Ms Omozusi Osolase, noted that they were ashamed of themselves before

now, saying that the community was never developed before the administration of the present governor.

"Before now, we were ashamed of ourselves, when are brother became the governor, he turned everything around, we are now leaving in a city, he is building a hospital, he is building a barrack, he is building school.

"We now have more teachers in our primary schools, the youths are being employed, my prayers for him is that no evil shall fall to him," she said.



INSPECTION OF ONGOING CONSTRUCTION:

L-R: Chairman, Senate Committee on Works, Sen. Patrick Ndubueze; Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi, and Chairman, House of Reps Committee on Works, Akin Alabi, during the inspection of the ongoing construction of Abuja-Keffi dual-carriage way lane 2, in Keffi, on Saturday.

3 'fake' clerics docked over alleged N2.3m scam

IBADAN

Three self acclaimed Islamic clerics, Hadi Ibrahim, Moshood Liadi, and Wakilat Alila, accused of N2.3 million, on Friday, appeared before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan.

Ibrahim, 49, Liadi, 50 and Alila, 52, whose addresses were not provided, are standing trial

over alleged conspiracy, fraud and stealing.

Each of defendants pleaded not guilty to the three-count charge.

The Prosecutor, ASP Sikiru Opaleye, told the court that the defendants committed the offences with some others still at large in April at Olunde area of Ibadan.

Opaleye alleged that the de-

fendants collected N2.3 million from the complainant, Alhaji Rasaan Adegoke, on the pretext of conducting a spiritual cleansing for his son.

Opaleye said the defendants converted the money for their personal use and all efforts made by the defendant to get back his money proved abortive.

He said that the offences contravened Sections 383, 419

and 516 of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi, granted each of the defendants bail in the sum of N750,000, and with two sureties each in like sum.

Ogunkanmi ordered that one of the sureties must be related to the defendants and adjourned the case until October 22 for mention.

Again, ADC official asks new judge to withdraw from Nafiu-Bala Gombe's suit

ABUJA

Mr Nkemakolam Ukandu, the National Welfare Secretary of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), has again asked Justice Peter Lifu of the Federal High Court in Abuja to withdraw from the suit filed against the leadership of the party.

Ukandu, in a motion on notice dated and filed on June 5 against the Nafiu-Bala Gombe's suit recently reassigned to him, prayed the judge to recuse himself pending the petition before the National Judicial Council (NJC).

Ukandu had, in the petition to the NJC, accused the Chief Judge (CJ) of the court, Justice John Tsoho, and Justice Lifu of

alleged bias, corruption and disobedience to the Supreme Court orders in respect of Gombe's case.

Ukandu had, in a separate suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1165/2026 and filed on June 4, sought an order compelling the NJC to investigate allegations of corruption, abuse of judicial powers levelled against Tsoho.

The plaintiff, in the suit, had named NJC, Justice Tsoho and Justice Lifu as 1st to 3rd defendants respectively.

Meanwhile, in the latest motion filed by his lawyer, Kalu-Kalu Agu, Ukandu, who is seeking to be joined in the Gombe's suit, prayed the court for an order directing the new judge not to preside over the case, citing the NJC's petition.

Alternatively, the applicant

sought an order transferring the case file in the suit number: FHC/ABJ/C8/1819/2025 between Gombe against ADC and four others back to the CJ, pending the hearing and determination of his petition and his suit against the duo.

Ukandu, in addition, sought an order staying further proceedings in Gombe's case against Sen. David Mark-led leadership of ADC, until his petition before NJC and the suit at the FHC are determined.

Ukandu predicated his motion for recusal on four grounds. He said "the subject matter of the petition and the suit is on grounds of corruption, abuse of judicial powers, disobedience to court orders and bias by Hon. Justice John Tso-

ho and Hon. Justice Peter Lifu against the Applicant."

He submitted that it would be in the interest of justice and respect for the protection of the sanctity of the judiciary that Lifu recuses himself from this suit and transfer the case file back to the CJ.

It would be recalled that the National Secretary of the ADC, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, had equally filed a similar motion against Gombe's suit, asking Justice Lifu to recuse himself from the case.

Aregbesola, in the motion on notice dated and filed June 1 by his lawyer, Mohammed Sheriff, argued that the constitution guarantees every litigant a hearing before an independent and impartial panel.

NEWS**WED: Enugu urges students on championing environmental sustainability****ENUGU**

The Enugu State Ministry of Environment and Climate Change have urged

students to champion environmental sustainability through responsible environmental practices and climate action. The ministry made the call

during activities marking the 2026 World Environment Day (WED) celebration in the state, according to a statement issued on Sunday in Enugu.

The statement was signed by Mr Elochukwu Anieze, Personal Assistant to the Senior Adviser to the Governor on

Climate Policy and Sustainable Development.

It stated that students from 20 schools across Enugu and Nsukka planted 400 trees during the event.

According to the statement, the exercise formed part of the pilot phase of a climate educa-

tion campaign tagged, "Rooted in Action: Growing Green Generation."

The initiative was organised by the Office of the Senior Adviser to the Governor on Climate Policy and Sustainable Development in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

It added that the project received funding support from UNICEF's Enugu Field Office, while the Ministry of Education partnered in its implementation.

The statement noted that the campaign aligned with the 2026 World Environment Day theme, "Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future."

It explained that the programme was designed to promote climate action and responsible environmental stewardship among young people.

"Students participated in tree-planting and environmental awareness activities in their respective schools.

"They also attended interactive sessions on climate change, conservation and sustainable lifestyles," it stated.

The ministry encouraged students to embrace proper waste management practices, reduce plastic use and sustain tree-planting activities to protect the environment.

It stressed that environmental protection required sustained collaboration among governments, institutions and citizens, adding that the newly planted trees would serve as symbols of hope, resilience and a greener future for the state.

The statement quoted Prof. Chukwumerije Okereke, Senior Adviser to the Governor on Climate Policy and Sustainable Development, as reaffirming the state government's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Okereke, represented by Anieze, described climate education as essential to raising environmentally conscious future leaders.

He said that engaging young people in practical climate activities would strengthen sustainable development efforts and contribute to a greener future.

The statement also quoted the Office of the First Lady as reiterating its commitment to environmental protection and youth development initiatives.

According to the office, students remain critical stakeholders in addressing climate change and building resilient communities.

The organisers commended participating schools, teachers and students for supporting the initiative.

**TREE PLANTING:**

Some of the students during the celebration of 2026 World Environment Day/Tree planting in Enugu on Sunday.

NAS provides free healthcare to 1000 children in Edo community

LAMAI CASSIUS

ETSAKO WEST

The National Association of Seadogs (NAS), popularly known as Pyrates Confraternity has provided free medical services to more than 1,000 children in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State as part of its medical outreach programmes.

Speaking during the medical mission at the weekend, the Capoon Hybrid Deck, Edo-North branch of NAS Mr Christopher Ikponmwosa said the outreach was aimed at bringing quality healthcare services to children between age 1 to 17-years.

The outreach which was organised by the Hybrid Deck Edo North branch in collaboration with Atlantic Deck, Atlanta Georgia USA, noted that the mission of NAS is to invest in the future of Nigerian children by improving their access to quality healthcare services.

According to him, "NAS is more concerned about providing free access to healthcare services to children at the locality.

"So far we have attended to about 450 children and our target is 1000," Ikponmwosa said.

The leader of the medical team, Dr. John Ugwu said the free medical services included; consultation, paediatric care,

eye checks, diagnostic tests, laboratory services, counselling, medication, free maternity kits for pregnant women and newly deliver women.

Dr. Ugwu, who is a senior medical officer with the Edo State Hospital Management Agency said the medical mission target 1000 children.

"We are providing free essential healthcare services to children between age 1 to 17-years. The free treatment include nutritional assessment, deworming, malaria screening, dental care, paediatric care, consultation, optomology care and free distribution of drugs.

"Our target is to ensure we provide free care services to 1000 children", he said.

Dr Ugwu however commended the large turnout of parents and their children to receive free treatment.

Some parents and beneficiaries who spoke at the event thanked NAS for the intervention, describing it as timely and impactful.

Mrs Kajidat Mutairu said she is excited to see her children receiving free treatment,"she said.

Another beneficiary, Mrs Mary Ezekiel, a petty trader, expressed gratitude to seadogs after receiving treatment alongside her three children.

She appealed for the organisers of the outreach to be held more frequently to enable more children to benefit.

2027: Ebonyi commissioner resigns, joins PDP**ABAKALIKI**

Mr Felix Igboke, a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Ebonyi State Commissioner for Project Monitoring, has resigned his position and defected to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Igboke, who officially announced his defection on Sunday during a PDP gathering attended by party leaders, executive committee members and supporters in Isu, Onicha Local Government Area of the state, said he defected with more than 10,000 supporters ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He described his return to the PDP as homecoming, noting that his political journey began with the party.

Igboke said his decision was informed by the need to align with a political platform capable of advancing the interests of the people and promoting inclusive development in the state.

"I am happy to return to the political platform that built me. I served as a councillor, development centre coordinator and chairman of Onicha Local Government Area under the same party before I joined the APC.

"I am grateful to the PDP family in Ebonyi State, espe-

cially the party's governorship candidate, Chief Ifeanyi Chukwuma-Odii, the incoming governor," he said.

Mr Chukwuma Igwe, the state chairman of the PDP, who welcomed the defectors, described Igboke's return to the party as a major boost to its fortunes ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Igwe said the PDP had regained its strength across the state and was well-positioned to reclaim power in the next election cycle.

According to him, the influx of thousands of supporters into the party demonstrates growing public confidence in the PDP and its leadership.

Also speaking, Mr Eni-Uduma Chima, the PDP candidate for the Afikpo/Edda Federal Constituency seat in 2027, said the party was experiencing rapid growth across Ebonyi.

Chima expressed optimism that the increasing support base would translate into electoral victories for the PDP in future elections.

He urged party members to remain united and committed to strengthening the party's structures at the grassroots level.

The event attracted party faithful, community leaders and supporters from various parts of the state, who pledged their continued support for the PDP.

Motorists bemoan slow pace of work on Kabba-Omuo-Ekiti road**AKURE**

Motorists plying Kabba-Omuo-Ekiti road have expressed concerns over the slow pace of construction on the corridor, citing frequent gridlock, damage to vehicles and huge man-hours losses.

They noted that the road is a crucial interstate economic route, connecting communities between Kogi and Ekiti States.

Motorists who spoke with our correspondent in Ado-Ekiti, lamented that passenger patronage had dropped sharply since construction began, stating that many commuters now take alternative routes to avoid delays.

They appealed to the Federal Government to prevail on the contractor handling the project to speed up work in order to ease vehicular difficulties, improve lives, and boost commercial and socio-economic activities in the area.

The respondents while expressing displeasure over the slow pace of work on the road, noted that the unpredictable global economic activities could be a hindrance towards the completion deadline.

The Chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Ekiti State Branch, Chief Omotayo Falope, said the road had been in a deplorable condition for a

long time, and was causing severe damage to vehicles.

"The road has become a death trap and an avenue for criminals to operate freely. Because it is a federal road and a linkage between states, it is very critical for not only for human survival, and but the state prosperity too.

"Our appeal is for government to expedite action on its completion, and aside the Kabba-Omuo-Ekiti road, we are grateful to the government for the major work on Akure-Ikere-Ado-Ekiti and the Ifaki-Omuo which has been fixed to a commendable extent," he said.

On his part, Mr Kehinde Afolabi, the Chairman, Nation-

al Association of Cooperative Transporters (NACT), Ekiti Chapter, said before the administration of President Bola Tinubu, the Akure-Ikere-Ado-Ekiti road was a major issue, causing traffic gridlock, severe vehicle damage, and extended travel times for commuters due to its deplorable state.

"The difficulties becomes more compounded as most of our businessmen and women from Ado-Ekiti who desire to board flights at Akure Airport, have to use the road.

"Even, for farmers in Ekiti to move their produce to neighbouring Ondo State becomes problematic, but today the road has been fixed.

Sanwo-Olu rallies Nigerians to support Tinubu, security agencies against terror

LAGOS

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has urged Nigerians to remain united and support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and security agencies in confronting terrorism and other security challenges across the country.

Sanwo-Olu made the call in a statement on Sunday while reacting to recent security incidents in parts of the country, describing the attacks as unfortunate but not insurmountable.

The governor said Nigerians must not allow the activities of criminal elements to either weak-

en their resolve or diminish their confidence in the nation's future.

"We are Nigerians. Our will is strong and our spirit is unbreakable.

"This is the time we must stand united as one people behind our nation's leader, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and all of our armed forces," he said.

According to him, terrorists and other criminal elements do not discriminate based on political affiliation, ethnicity or religion when carrying out attacks, stressing that national support for security efforts should also rise above partisan considerations.

"The forces of evil confront-

ing our nation do not ask for our political affiliation before they kill, maim and destroy.

"So must our resolve and support for our nation be devoid of political leanings and divisive rhetorics," he said.

Sanwo-Olu expressed sympathy for victims of recent attacks and urged Nigerians to keep affected communities in their prayers.

"Every life lost is a tragedy. Every community threatened by violence deserves our soli-

darity, support and protection.

"We must continue to keep the victims of these unfortunate incidents in our thoughts and prayers," he said.

The governor also called for prayers and support for teachers and students abducted in Orire Local Government Area of Oyo State.

He noted that Nigeria had overcome several challenges throughout its history, including economic, political and social difficulties, expressing

confidence that the country would emerge stronger from the current security situation.

"Our country has faced many challenges throughout its history.

"Yet, through resilience, courage and unity of purpose, we have always emerged stronger. This moment will be no different," he said.

Sanwo-Olu urged citizens to remain vigilant and actively support security agencies through intelligence sharing and cooperation with lawful authorities.

"As citizens, we all have a stake in the security and stability of our country.

"Government alone cannot win this battle without the support, cooperation, vigilance and active intelligence sharing by local communities," he said.

The governor reaffirmed his confidence in the president and security institutions, saying efforts to strengthen intelligence gathering and dismantle criminal networks across the country would yield positive results.

Anambra Court remands 8 pastors over alleged fake miracles

AWKA

The Homeland Security Special Court sitting in Awka, Anambra the has remanded eight pastors in custodial centre over their alleged involvement in staging fake miracles, popularly known as "arrangee" miracles.

The defendants are; Ndu-bisi Nnachukwu, Ugochukwu Ekeleme, Bishop Emeka Nwamkpa, Peter Chukwu, Chinedu Egwuonwu, Ebele Nnachukwu, Miracle Iruoma and Chukwukadibia Ogwuama.

They were arraigned by the Anambra State Government on charges bordering on fraudulent religious practices and obtaining by false pretence.

The Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in the state, Mr Tobechukwu Nweke (SAN), led the prosecution team.

According to the prosecution, the defendants allegedly paid individuals to pose as

beneficiaries of miraculous healings and deliverance during church programmes to deceive members of the public and obtain financial rewards.

The prosecution alleged that some of the pastors worked with agents who recruited persons to act as recipients of miracles during worship services, thereby exploiting unsuspecting worshippers.

The defendants were arraigned in separate cases marked A/65C/26, A/55C/26, A/63C/26, A/64C/26, A/57C/26, A/60C/26, A/58C/26 and A/61C/26.

They were charged with wielding fake supernatural powers and using places of worship for the commission of crimes, contrary to Sections 18(3) and 19(1) of the Anambra State Homeland Security Law, 2025.

They were also charged with obtaining by false pretence, contrary to Section 3(1) of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act, 2006.

Osun 2026: APC remains formidable despite defections —Chieftain

OSOGBO

Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has said that recent defections by some party members will not weaken the party's structure, popularity, or electoral prospects ahead of the August 15 governorship election.

Speaking with journalists on Sunday in Osogbo, Oyintiloye described the defections as a common feature of politics, particularly during electioneering periods.

Some prominent members of the APC in the state have recently resigned from the party ahead of the August 15 governorship election.

Oyintiloye, however, maintained that the development poses no threat to the APC's readiness and determination to reclaim power in the state.

According to him, the party remains the most formidable political force in Osun, with a strong grassroots presence across wards, polling units, communities, and local government areas.

"The APC in Osun is bigger than any individual or group.

"Our party is built on a solid foundation that has endured for decades. We have a resilient structure, loyal membership, and an ever-expanding support base across the state.

"Those who think the APC has been weakened by the exit of a few members are out of touch with realities on the ground.

"The strength of our party resides in the people, and the people remain firmly with the APC," he said.

Oyintiloye, a former lawmaker, added that the emergence of Bola Oyebamiji as the party's governorship candidate has boosted members' morale and generated enthusiasm among voters.



MEDICAL OUTREACH:

Medical personnel attending to beneficiaries of a medical outreach sponsored by National Association of Seadogs (NAS), in Auchi at the weekend.

Nigeria recommits to advancing global environment governance, biodiversity conservation

ABUJA

Nigeria has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing global environment governance, biodiversity conservation and land restoration in line with the objectives of the Great Green Wall Initiative across the Sahel region.

Nigeria's position was made by Mr Saleh Abubakar, the Director-General of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW) at the 8th Global Environment Facility

(GEF) Assembly held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, as contained in a statement from the Ministry of Environment.

Abubakar said the participation of the agency underscored President Bola Tinubu administration's determination to address the impact of climate change in Nigeria, especially in the 11 front line states.

The DG explained that the high-level global gathering brought together world leaders, policymakers, environmental experts, development partners, and stakeholders to find solu-

tion to pressing environmental challenges and set sustainable development priorities.

"The assembly serves as a strategic platform for advancing international cooperation on climate action, biodiversity conservation, land restoration, sustainable agriculture, and environmental sustainability.

He explained that the agency would strengthen collaboration with global partners with a view to mobilising support for Nigeria's Great Green Wall initiatives and other environmental restoration programmes.

"This initiative is targeted at combating desertification, land degradation, improving livelihoods, enhancing food security, building resilience".

Abubakar called for enhanced support of global partners to enable the agency address desertification in northern Nigeria and restore degraded ecosystems, including strengthening the role of local communities.

Delegates from 186 nations gathered to shape environmental financing, specifically focusing on climate resilience, pollution reduction, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Kano board moves to enhance service delivery in secondary healthcare facilities

KANO

The Kano State Hospitals Management Board (HMB) has inaugurated two high-powered management teams to monitor and evaluate all secondary healthcare facilities across the state to enhance service delivery.

This was contained in a statement issued by the board's spokesperson, Samira Sulaiman in Kano.

The statement said the initiative aims to strengthen accountability, promote service excellence, and ensure adherence to

professional medical standards.

It explained that the exercise would provide a platform for direct engagement with healthcare workers to identify and resolve operational challenges in the facilities.

According to the statement, Team A will be chaired by the Executive Secretary and include directors of administration, pharmacy, and laboratory services, as well as representatives from the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and other professional bodies.

"Team B will be headed by the Director of Medical Serv-

ices, with members including the nursing leadership, Director of Accounts, and representatives from various health-related unions and associations.

"Both teams have been mandated to assess service quality, staff discipline, and workforce productivity across all secondary health institutions in the state.

"The teams are also expected to evaluate the functionality of medical equipment and infrastructure, and the availability of essential drugs and laboratory consumables," it added.

The statement further explained that the teams would

monitor hospital cleanliness, ensure compliance with clinical and administrative standards, and foster a culture of patient-centered care among staff.

The spokesperson quoted the Executive Secretary of the board, Dr Mansur Mudi-Nagoda, as saying the exercise reflected the board's commitment to institutionalising continuous quality improvement and responsive management in the health sector.

"The board will continue to deploy effective mechanisms to ensure that government investments translate into improved services for all citizens.

NEWS**NANS begins nationwide probe of abandoned TETFund projects****ABUJA**

The National Association of Nigerian Students has launched a 90-day nationwide review of Tertiary Education Trust Fund projects following growing concerns over alleged project abandonment, poor execution and delayed delivery of interventions in tertiary institutions across the country.

The student body announced the constitution of an Independent TETFund In-

tervention Project Assessment, Verification and Monitoring Committee to investigate the implementation and impact of projects funded by the intervention agency.

In a statement issued on Sunday, NANS President, Akinteye Babatunde, said the decision was informed by persistent complaints about the quality and completion of some TETFund-funded projects in beneficiary institutions.

According to the association, while the Federal Gov-

ernment has continued to invest heavily in the education sector through TETFund interventions, concerns remain over whether the projects are being delivered as approved and whether students are deriving the intended benefits.

NANS said allegations of project abandonment, poor execution, substandard delivery, delayed completion and other irregularities involving some contractors had generated public concern and raised questions about the effective-

ness of the interventions.

The association noted that the committee would embark on a nationwide tour of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education to independently verify the status of TETFund projects and assess their impact on teaching, learning and student welfare.

"The committee shall evaluate the level of implementation, utilisation, quality of delivery and overall impact of these projects on students and host institutions," the statement partly read.

added that the exercise was also intended to support ongoing efforts to improve transparency and accountability in the management of public funds allocated to tertiary education.

The committee is expected to submit its findings and rec-

ommendations within 90 days. NANS said the report would guide its engagement with relevant authorities and would be forwarded to the Presidency, the Federal Ministry of Education and other stakeholders for necessary action.

The committee is chaired by Salahudeen A. Lukman, with Comrade Okereke Godson Bishop, Dominic Philip AVM, Odiahi Thomas Ikhine, Wande T. Ajayi and Ibrahim A. Ibrahim serving as members. Gambo Abubakar will act as secretary.

NANS urged tertiary institutions, TETFund officials, contractors and student leaders to cooperate with the committee to ensure a credible assessment process.

TETFund was established by the Federal Government

to provide supplementary funding for public tertiary institutions through revenues generated from the education tax. The agency finances the construction of lecture theatres, laboratories, hostels and other infrastructure, as well as research grants, academic staff development and institutional capacity-building programmes.

Over the years, TETFund has become one of the major sources of capital funding for public tertiary institutions. However, concerns about abandoned projects, cost overruns, delays and quality of execution have continued to attract criticism from education stakeholders, prompting calls for stronger oversight and monitoring of intervention projects.

Rise in capital importation driven by short-term investors seeking quick gains —Expert**ABUJA**

The Financial expert, Okechukwu Unegbu, says Nigeria's rise in capital importation in first quarter of 2026 was driven by foreign investors seeking short-term capital market gains rather than long-term economic opportunities.

Unegbu, a former President of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), said this in an interview with in Abuja on Sunday while reacting to Nigeria's Capital Importation report for first quarter of 2026.

The National Bureau of Sta-

tistics (NBS) reported that total capital importation rose to 10.37 billion dollars in Q1 2026 from 5.64 billion dollars recorded in the corresponding period of 2025(Q1 2025). The figure also represented a 60.97 per cent increase from the 6.44 billion dollars recorded in Q4 2025.

According to the NBS, portfolio investment accounted for the largest share of capital importation at 9.86 billion dollars, representing 95.09 per cent of total capital importation.

This was followed by Other Investment with 374.48 million dollars, accounting for 3.61 per

cent, while Foreign Direct Investment recorded the least at 135.08 million dollars, accounting for 1.30 per cent of total capital importation in Q1 2026.

Unegbu said the surge in capital inflows was driven by increased investor interest in Nigeria's thriving stock market and the pursuit of higher returns amid improving global market conditions.

"What has happened is that the stock market is on the upswing globally and investors are moving funds from areas with lower returns to places where they can make more money."

Abuja residents switch to firewood, charcoal as gas hits N2,000 per kg**ABUJA**

The rising price of cooking gas has forced many households and businesses in the Federal Capital Territory to embrace traditional fuels such as charcoal and firewood.

The News Agency of Nigeria reports that cooking gas prices in the FCT have risen sharply in recent months, moving from about N1,200 per kg to N2,000 per kg.

Industry operators have attributed the increase to supply shortages, higher depot costs, foreign exchange pressures and rising transportation expenses.

Consumers and vendors of the essential commodity, who spoke to NAN on Sunday, said the rising cost has forced many households and businesses to seek cheaper cooking alternatives.

A food vendor in Gwarimpa,

Abuja, Mrs. Mayo Akinpelu, said she stopped using cooking gas after repeated price increases made it too expensive for her business.

According to Akinpelu, she switched to firewood and charcoal because they are cheaper and easier to purchase in small quantities.

"Refilling my gas cylinder became difficult because the price kept rising. I could no longer afford it and still make reasonable profit. Right now, 12.5kg of LPG goes for N25,000.

"Firewood and charcoal are not as convenient as gas, but they help me reduce costs and keep my business running," she said.

She added that, although customers sometimes complain about delays, the alternative fuels have become her only practical option amid rising gas prices.

Another food vendor in Dutse, Bwari Area Council,

Ms. Victory Samson, said the increase has significantly reduced her profit margin and affected her business operations.

"It has affected a lot; my profit margin has reduced. The government should help and bring the price back to normal," Samson said.

In Kubwa, a business owner, Mrs. Grace Oluwatimilehin, said she was shocked by the latest increase after recently buying gas at a lower rate.

"I filled my cylinder at N1,600 per kg the last time, but when I went back yesterday, the price had risen to N2,000 per kg.

"I now use electric hot plates for cooking and sometimes rely on charcoal and firewood instead of gas," she said.

From what we observe, the major issue is product scarcity, although we do not know the exact cause," Bolanle said.

**PUBLIC NOTICE
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT**

PUBLIC DISPLAY EXERCISE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (ESIA) FOR THE PROPOSED +/-16KM DUAL GAS PIPELINE SYSTEM FROM OML 111 OREDO (OZIENGBE SOUTH FIELD) IN IKPOBA OKHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA TO OML 96 IN GELEGELE FIELD, OVIA NORTHEAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE BY OVII PIPELINE COMPANY LIMITED.

In accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act CAP E12 LFN 2004, which makes it mandatory for proponents of all new major developmental activities to carry out EIA for their proposed projects, the Federal Ministry of Environment hereby announces twenty-one (21) working days public display for information and comments on the draft ESIA report submitted by Ovii Pipeline Company Limited.

Brief Project Description:

The proposed project involves the development of a +/-16 km dual natural gas pipeline system linking the Oziengbe South Field in OML 111 located in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area to the Gelegele Field in OML 96 located in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State. The project is designed to facilitate the evacuation, transmission, and utilization of natural gas resources within the Niger Delta region.

The Display Centers Are:

- * Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area Headquarters, Idogbo, Edo State.
- * Ovia North-East Local Government Area Headquarters, Okada, Edo State
- * Edo State Ministry of Environment and Sustainability, Benin City.
- * Federal Ministry of Environment office, Benin City field office, Edo State
- * Federal Ministry of Environment, Environmental Assessment Department, Environment House, Independence Way South, Central Business District, Abuja - F.C.T.
- * www.ead.gov.ng

Duration of Display:

Date: 8th June - 7th July, 2026

Time: 8:00am - 4:00pm Daily.

ALL COMMENTS SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE HONOURABLE MINISTER, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT HEADQUARTERS, MABUSHI, ABUJA FCT AND VIA info@ead.gov.ng ON OR BEFORE 14TH JULY, 2026.

Signed
PERMANENT SECRETARY
For: Honourable Minister.

Court adjourns suit seeking deregistration of ADC, AA, others indefinitely**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja has adjourned indefinitely proceedings in the suit seeking the deregistration of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Accord Party, Action Alliance (AA) and others.

Justice Peter Lifu had fixed last Friday to deliver judgment in the suit filed by the Incorporated Trustees of the National Forum of Former Legislators against some political parties.

However, hearing in the case was stalled after the Accord Party secured a stay of proceedings from the Court of Appeal on May 29.

At the commencement of sitting, the court registrar informed all parties that judgment had been postponed and that a new date would be communicated in due course.

Reacting to the development, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Forum of Former Legislators, Mr Raphael Igbokwe, expressed disappointment over the Appeal Court decision to grant a stay of proceedings.

Igbokwe, while speaking to newsmen, said the forum had already challenged the appellate court decision by filing an appeal against the stay of proceedings at the Supreme Court.

"We are concerned that a matter which had reached the stage of judgment has now been stalled through a stay of proceedings.

"In practical terms, it amounts to an arrest of judgment.

"Nevertheless, we remain committed to pursuing all lawful avenues to ensure that the issues raised in this case are resolved in the interest of strengthening Nigeria's democracy and advancing con-

stitutional and electoral jurisprudence," he said.

He maintained that the forum's actions were aimed at deepening democratic governance and promoting the development of constitutional and electoral law in the country.

The suit, marked FHC/ABJ/CS/2637/2026 and instituted by the forum, named the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as 1st defendants.

The plaintiff also joined several political parties, including the ADC, AA, Action Peoples Party (APP), Accord Party and Zenith Labour Party, among others, as defendants.

The plaintiff argued that the affected political parties failed to meet constitutional requirements relating to electoral spread and performance.

It contended that political parties were required to secure at least 25 per cent of votes in prescribed elections to remain relevant under the law.

Foreign

NEWS

Huge crowds throng Madrid streets for Pope's open-air Mass

More than a million people lined the streets of Madrid on Sunday as Pope Leo XIV celebrated an open-air Mass in the Spanish capital, organisers said.

He greeted the crowds as he made his way through the city in his popemobile on the second day of his official visit to the country, with King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia among the congregants for his morning service.

Worshippers waved Spanish and Vatican flags and shouted "long live the Pope", while others threw petals upon his arrival at the Plaza de Cibeles.

During his sermon, he urged those gathered to express their faith by helping others, saying

God "identifies with the poor, the downtrodden, those who are alone and forsaken".

He said they should not look at religion as "a museum of the past to be visited, but a school of faith from which to draw even today".

Authorities mounted a major security operation for the Mass and subsequent procession through central Madrid.

The streets were decorated with banners bearing the Pope's face and thousands of white and yellow carnations to match the Vatican flag's colours.

Large crowds had similarly gathered in the city as he began his week-long trip on Saturday, where he praised the Spanish government's opposition to global conflicts and its support

for migrants during a reception at the royal palace.

Local organisers and the Vatican said 1.2m people lined Madrid's streets

"I have come to meet Jesus Christ through the words of the Pope," 30-year-old Marta Perez told the AFP news agency on Sunday. "He's come to do good, with all his love."

Ana Milagros, 64, said the Pope was trying to "help all of us".

"There is a lot of polarisation and differences in politics, in social matters, in the economy," she said.

Late on Saturday, the pontiff was joined by some 500,000 congregants - most of whom were young people - for a prayer vigil near Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium

which stretched into the night.

"In the face of the emptiness of indifference and compliance, before the violence of war and lies, you must be the sparks of a new humanity," he told those gathered.

His remarks echoed those he delivered during his royal reception, in which he praised Spain's commitment to peace and its "faithful adherence to international law".

The country's socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has clashed with US President Donald Trump over the US and Israel's war against Iran, and with Israel over the war in Gaza. The Chicago-born pope has also drawn criticism from the president over his anti-war views.



MADRID STREETS FOR POPE:

Pope Leo held the service on the second day of his official visit to Spain.

Insecurity and instability drive voters in Peru's tight presidential race

Bus driver Toño says a criminal gang shot him in the legs and body after demanding money.

"If you don't meet our demands, we will kill your drivers."

This message, demanding about \$15,000, was sent by a criminal gang to a bus company in a poor suburb of Peru's capital, Lima. It preceded an armed attack on bus driver, Toño.

"They shot me in the legs and abdomen. I was out of work for four months, now I work with fear. Although my wounds are dry, internally I feel pain," he says.

Toño's case was one of nearly 30,000 extortion incidents reported in Peru in 2025, many targeting small businesses or transport workers.

This issue, along with rising homicides, is why insecurity and crime have become top concerns for voters in Sunday's presidential election in Peru.

The right-wing Keiko Fuji-

mori, daughter of the late former president, Alberto Fujimori, is running for a fourth time against left-wing Roberto Sánchez.

Fujimori has defined her campaign with an array of "tough-on-crime" policies, while Sánchez has promised sweeping changes to the state and higher public spending.

In Lima's suburb of San Juan de Lurigancho, dusty hilltop neighbourhoods sprawl precariously down the slopes. Armed police guard the gate to the bus depot where Toño works. They say this is Lima's worst district for extortion.

Toño, who now drives with plain-clothed armed police on board for his protection, wants whoever the next president is to have a "strong hand against crime".

According to an independent observatory of crime and violence, 239 drivers were killed last year.

"I've never been so afraid to

leave my young children. If I had money, I'd leave the country," he says.

Eiffel Calla, head of security at the depot, says five drivers from their company have been attacked. One was killed, another was left in a vegetative state.

Fears of insecurity have driven other Latin American nations further right in recent elections, boosting leaders who promise a hardline approach to law and order.

At her final campaign rallies, Fujimori declared "war" on extortionists, promising to deploy the military against organised crime, control prisons, and work with financial institutions to block extorted money.

She's invoked the memory of her father, Alberto Fujimori - president from 1990-2000 - whose hardline approach resulted in him being jailed for human rights abuses. His supporters, though, remember him

for bringing order to the country and stabilising the economy.

At a Fujimori rally, supporter Piero argues a heavy-handed approach to insecurity is "sorely lacking in these times" and describes Peru as "overflowing" with crime.

Another, Janeth, says "for economy stability, we choose Keiko Fujimori".

Despite having churned through eight presidents in the last 10 years, Peru's economy has remained relatively stable. It is a major exporter of critical minerals and metals such as copper.

Fujimori's supporters pit her free market approach to the economy and pledge to attract more US investment against Sánchez's proposals to review mining contracts, increase some corporate taxes, raise the minimum wage and give the state more control over natural resources - ideas that have unsettled financial markets.

'It was either you kill or be killed' - ongoing nightmares of an ex-child soldier in Somalia

Shopkeeper Yusuf Ali still battles with memories of his time as a child soldier fighting on the streets of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu.

The 34-year-old became embroiled in the Islamist insurgency, which erupted nearly 20 years ago, and while the city's urban landscape is healing, few resources are devoted to those still suffering with the psychological scars of the conflict.

Warning: This article contains details some readers may find upsetting.

When he was 14 years old, a coalition of Sharia courts seized power in Somalia and provided some sense of stability in a country that had been riven by devastating clan warfare since the regime of President Siad Barre collapsed in 1991.

But the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) marked the first instance of political Islam gaining a foothold in the African continent since al-Qaeda's 11 September 2001 attacks on the US.

Policymakers in Washington viewed the UIC with hostility, accusing it of having ties to al-Qaeda. Its military youth wing was known as al-Shabab, meaning "The Lads".

In December 2006, thousands of Ethiopian troops invaded Somalia under the cover of American drones with the aim of toppling the courts just six months after they had taken over.

Ethiopia's invasion was deeply unpopular in Somalia and was met with fierce opposition as al-Shabab and its allies, including a coalition of splinter groups known as the Muqawama, meaning "Resistance", clubbed together to fight it.

At the time Ali lived in Huriiwaa, an impoverished district in the north of Mogadishu.

Aged one, he had lost his father - killed while taking part in what has been dubbed the "Battle of Mogadishu", when Somali fighters famously clashed with US soldiers after the downing of two American Black Hawk helicopters.

It was hard growing up without his dad, but it was the guerrilla warfare that overtook Mogadishu during the Ethiopian invasion that changed him forever.

"At night, I'd often hear a buzzing sound. I was in secondary school and didn't realise it then, but these were planes surveilling our neighbourhood," Ali tells the BBC.

By the spring of 2007, fighting intensified with heavy shelling and bombardment of densely populated civilian neighbourhoods suspected of sheltering insurgents.

"On one of the nights, a large barrage of shells hit our area and some of them struck our neighbour's house. Our house shook and I felt like the soil under my feet had moved - then I started hearing screams," Ali recalls.

Manhunt for suspects after 12 people shot near festival in Ohio

Police say they are searching for suspects after at least 12 people were shot near a festival in Toledo, in the midwestern US state of Ohio.

The Toledo Police Department said 10 people "are reported to be in stable condition, while two remain in critical condition".

It said it responded to a report of a shooting near the Old West End Festival at around 17:37 local time (21:37 GMT) on Saturday.

Toledo Deputy Police Chief Joe Heffernan said it appeared that two people fired weapons and they were "probably shooting at each other".

Footage shared online - which has not yet been independently verified - appears to show people running and screaming as a volley of gunshots rings out.

The victims' ages ranged from 16 to 61. Police Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz earlier told local news outlet WTOL 11 that they all were expected to survive.

Eyewitness Tito Aguilar told the BBC's US partner CBS News he was ordering food when he saw a group of "juveniles" attacking another young person.

Aguilar said he started recording on his phone and then heard gunshots. He then ran from the area, he said, but

eventually returned to find his own friends and saw several people with apparent injuries from the shooting.

Police Lt Dan Gerken expressed shock at the level of violence.

"Twelve people being shot, that's the most I've been to a scene. I've been to a lot of scenes, but this is way over the top," he told reporters.

Gerken said police were talking to victims and witnesses and reviewing camera footage. He appealed for help from the local community.

The Old West End Festival describes itself as "a two-day event celebrating one of the largest historic districts in the country with live music, multiple food markets, a beer garden, house tours, shopping, and much more".

Heffernan told reporters: "It's just a shame a few people, for whatever reasons going through their head, decide to disrupt something that has been a beloved community event for many, many, many years."

"It's just... horrible." Police say the investigation currently includes the area of Delaware Avenue and Robinwood Avenue. A map on the festival website suggests a music and food area was at that intersection.

NEWS**Foreign****Iran says staff blocked from entering US after players given World Cup visas**

Iran has accused the US of denying visas to "integral" members of its national football team's backroom staff, hours after Washington confirmed Iranian players had been given permission to travel to the upcoming World Cup.

US officials said visas had been issued to all players and "necessary support staff" on Friday, 10 days before Iran's opening fixture in Los Angeles on 15 June.

They also said Iran would not be allowed to "abuse this system to sneak terrorists into the United States under false pretences".

Iran's embassy in Turkey accused the US of "politically biased interference in sport" by denying visas to a "large portion of the managerial and executive staff" and "technical advisers".

Iranian state-linked media said 15 administration officials, including the head of the football federation, his deputy, and a media director were among those who were denied entry to the US.

The team set off from their training base in Turkey on Saturday en route Mexico, where they will be based for the tournament, and are expected to land in the early hours of Sunday after a 20-hour flight.

Under the conditions of their visas, the squad will have to enter and leave the US on the same day as their matches, Iran's ambassador to Mexico

said on Saturday.

A statement described the US announcement as a "white-wash", adding: "You have now escalated the deliberate and discriminatory treatment against Iran's national football team to its highest level."

Iranian embassy officials called on Fifa, football's world governing body, to intervene.

The 2026 World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by the US, Canada and Mexico, begins on 11 June, with Iran securing their place by finishing top of their qualification group in March 2025, almost a year before war broke out.

It will be the first iteration of the competition to see a host nation receive the team of a country it is at war with.

In late May, Iran moved its training base to Mexico from Tucson, Arizona.

The US Department of Homeland Security did not say whether any restrictions would apply to members of the Iranian national team and official delegation while in the US during the tournament, but told the BBC in a statement that DHS is "steadfast in our commitment to the safety and security of the American people and attendees of the 2026 FIFA World Cup".

The agency also said they are "intricately involved in the whole of government approach securing the 11 host city sites across the nation, including Los Angeles".

Lebanese general among three soldiers killed in Israeli attack on car

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) says it has launched an investigation after confirming it attacked a vehicle carrying Lebanese soldiers in southern Lebanon.

The Lebanese Army said Saturday's "aggressive and barbaric" strike had killed a brigadier-general, a captain and a private. The IDF said the vehicle was "moving suspiciously towards forces" and gunfire had been reported in the area.

Israel is not in direct conflict with the Lebanese government, which is involved in talks with Israel to secure a ceasefire.

But it has been fighting Hezbollah since March, primarily in southern Lebanon, from where the Iran-backed armed group has launched rocket and drone attacks into northern Israel.

On Saturday, the IDF said it struck around 150 Hezbollah "infrastructure sites" in southern Lebanon over the weekend, including what it said were weapon storage sites and command centres.

The strike against the Lebanese army vehicle happened on a road close to the village of Kfar

Tebnit, around four miles north of the Litani River and close to the city of Nabatieh, where there has been intense fighting and displacement in recent months.

The IDF said the vehicle it struck was travelling in an "active and evacuated combat zone" where it believes Hezbollah has operated from.

A statement said troop movements in the area require coordination with the IDF, and repeated that its forces "are operating against the Hezbollah terrorist organisation, not against the Lebanese Army".

The Lebanese Army has reacted furiously to the attack, accusing Israel of "brutal, deliberate and repeated aggression".

It shared images of the burnt-out wreckage of a car on a road outside the village.

The victims have been identified as Brig Gen Samer Sabra, Cpt Elie Khoury, and Pte Hassan Ghazal.

News of the attack comes after Hezbollah's leadership rejected efforts to revive a US-backed ceasefire agreed between Israel and Lebanon following talks which did not involve the Iran-backed group.



CAR THAT WAS ATTACKED:

The Lebanese Army released images of the car it says was attacked by the Israeli military.

Hegseth attacks Europe over migration with beach 'invasion' D-Day speech

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has criticised European nations over migration for allowing what he described as an "invasion" on their shores, during a D-Day anniversary speech in France.

Hegseth was speaking in Normandy 82 years after allied forces stormed French beaches to liberate Nazi-occupied Europe in 1944.

"Sadly, today, different European beaches are stormed by different dangerous ideologies," Hegseth said. "Beaches in Spain, in Italy, in Greece and Bulgaria. Boats and men arrive. When will European capitals do something about that invasion?"

Migration has become a major political issue across Europe, with parties supporting hardline immigration policies surging in polls.

The Trump administration sees an immigration crackdown as a key part of its domestic policy agenda, requesting billions more in funding

for enforcement agencies.

Hegseth's comments mark a further criticism of European migration policy by senior members of the Trump administration.

On Friday, US Vice-President JD Vance blamed the death of the 18-year-old British student Henry Nowak, who was fatally stabbed last year in Southampton by Vickrum Digwa, on the "mass invasion of migrants" and said the "only response" was "righteous anger".

Downing Street responded by criticising "people trying to interfere in our democracy," adding that the Nowak family had "said they do not want his death to be used to create further division".

The Crown Prosecution Service has confirmed that Digwa was born British.

Speaking in France, Hegseth said that in the years since D-Day some European capitals have grown too "comfortable" with their hard-fought freedoms, forgetting that "freedom

is not free".

"The men who fought and died here restored freedom to Europe," Hegseth said. "That freedom must be maintained by this generation of leaders and war fighters or what they fought for was merely temporary."

D-Day was the largest seaborne military operation ever attempted and involved the simultaneous landing of tens of thousands of troops from the UK, US and Canada on five separate beaches in Normandy in northern France.

US President Donald Trump has also criticised European immigration policy, telling the UN last year that European countries were "going to hell" due to "uncontrolled migration".

In response, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said the president's remarks were "not right", while accepting the "challenge" of tackling illegal migration, particularly from people crossing the English Channel in small boats.

Sea arrivals into mainland

Europe peaked in 2015, when the UN said more than a million people crossed the Mediterranean - a number fuelled in part by a wave of refugees fleeing Syria's civil war and conflict in Afghanistan.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, there were a combined 169,341 sea arrivals to the UK, Greece, Italy, Spain and Cyprus. Crossings to the UK accounted for about 23% of the total.

Between 1 January and 3 June 2026, a total of 9,142 people crossed the English Channel by small boat to the UK from France. This was down by 38% on the same period the previous year.

In December, the Trump administration unveiled its new National Security Strategy, which asserted that if current trends continue Europe would be "unrecognisable in 20 years or less" and its economic issues are "eclipsed by the real and more stark prospect of civilisational erasure".

Steve Rosenberg: Russia's economic forum overshadowed by drone attacks on St Petersburg

An evil sorcerer is the last person you'd expect to see at an economic forum.

But there he stood working his wizardry.

With sleight of hand Russian folklore villain "Koshchei the Deathless" (or, rather, someone dressed as him) produced coins out of thin air, "broke" and reassembled someone's glasses and shocked passers-by with occasional puffs of smoke from his fingers.

"Russians are unpredictable people," he declared. "We do things no one expects."

Perhaps.

But in St Petersburg last week, the unexpected was delivered most dramatically by Ukraine.

Ukrainian drones attacked the St Petersburg area on the opening - and closing - days of the set-piece International Economic Forum (SPIEF).

The abiding image of SPIEF 2026 will be the huge plume of thick black smoke which dominated the St Petersburg skyline on Wednesday. Without specifying what was hit, local officials admitted that drones had damaged "infrastructure". All the delegates saw the smoke as they arrived at the expo centre

on the edge of the city.

Volodymyr Zelensky published an open letter to Vladimir Putin. Ukraine's president taunted Russia's leader about his age and about Russian setbacks in the war but proposed the two leaders meet in a neutral country to talk peace.

President Putin's response?

Nothing unpredictable about that.

The Kremlin leader, who had rejected previous calls for direct talks with President Zelensky, criticised the letter's "rude" tone and dismissed the offer.

"It's not the author of the letter I need to respond to," President Putin said, "but our soldiers on the frontline... I say to them: keep at it, brothers!"

Vladimir Putin is not ready to end Russia's war on Ukraine. Not unless it's on his terms.

I listened to what he said at the forum's plenary session. There were few surprises.

The Putin we saw is the Putin we expected to see - uncompromising, unrepentant, determined to project an image of strength and unwavering conviction. He tried to appear confident about the war, and about Russia's economy.

Feature



GOVERNOR SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

Governor Okpebholo's message is Hope for a Greater Nigeria

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

Nigeria is passing through one of the most challenging periods in its history. And as a country this is not the first time and it has always overcome as it will soon do with the current challenges. From insecurity and growing uncertainty, many citizens have difficult questions about her future. Communities are apprehensive. Families are worried. Citizens are distraught. It's about about their safety. Businesses are struggling to stay afloat.

In moments like these, leadership is not only about policies and projects. It is also about inspiring confidence, strengthening faith, and reminding people that difficult seasons do not last forever. Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo captured this succinctly when this Sunday he visited LoveWorld City (Christ Embassy) in Benin City and called on Nigerians to pray for the nation. As has become characteristic of his messages on such occasions, this was straightforward and powerful: Nigeria does not belong to kidnappers, criminals, or

those who profit from fear.

The Governor's statement resonates because it speaks to a reality confronting many communities all over Nigeria today. Kidnapping has become a major security concern. Criminal activities continue to threaten livelihoods and create anxiety among citizens. Yet the Governor's response was not one of despair. Instead, he called for greater faith, collective prayers and collective action.

For Governor Okpebholo, prayer is not an alternative to governance. It is a source of strength for governance. All over time, nations have often turned to faith during periods of crisis. Nigeria should not be an exception- Prayer provides hope when circumstances appear overwhelming. It strengthens resilience, promotes unity, and encourages people to believe that positive change is possible.

However, at the same time, prayer must be accompanied by action. This is the principle guiding Governor Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda, which since he took office focuses on Security, Health, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and

Education. Across Edo State, road construction projects, healthcare initiatives, educational investments, and security interventions are ongoing efforts aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens.

And as the Governor has repeatedly emphasised, development is not measured only by physical infrastructure but also reflected in the peace, stability, and confidence enjoyed by the people. This is what explains the governor continued exhortation, encouraging citizens to pray for the nation, the state, and its leaders and beyond religious affiliations.

Recall earlier this year, during the simultaneous observance of Ramadan and the Christian Lenten season, Governor Okpebholo urged Muslims and Christians to use the sacred period to pray for Nigeria's peace, unity, and prosperity. The message reflected the spirit of religious harmony that has remained one of Edo State's strengths.

At a time when divisions often dominate public discourse, such calls for unity deserve attention. The challenges facing Nigeria do not discrimi-

nate on the basis of religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation. Likewise, the responsibility of rebuilding the nation belongs to everyone.

The recently declared 14-day period of prayer and fasting in Edo State also reflects this understanding. It is a call for spiritual reflection and renewed commitment to the values that strengthen society—peace, integrity, compassion, discipline, and service.

It is in this light that the Governor's Sunday request for prayers for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is equally significant. Regardless of political differences, national progress requires leaders at all levels to succeed in delivering security, economic stability, and development. Praying for wisdom, guidance, and strength for those entrusted with leadership responsibilities is ultimately a prayer for the nation's future.

What stands out about Governor Okpebholo's message is its balance. While emphasising the power of prayer, he continues to pursue practical solutions to the challenges facing Edo State. His administration recognises that faith and hard work are not

opposing forces; they are complementary pillars of progress.

As Edo people participate in this season of prayer and fasting, the expectation should not be that challenges will disappear overnight. Rather, it should be that citizens become more united, communities become more vigilant, leaders become more accountable, and society becomes more determined to reject criminality and embrace development.

Nigeria's future will not be determined by kidnappers or criminals. It will be shaped by the collective resolve of citizens who refuse to surrender hope, who believe in the power of unity, and who remain committed to building a better society. This is the message Governor Okpebholo continues to advance.

It is a message of faith. It is a message of responsibility. Above all, it is a message of hope that Nigeria can overcome its challenges and emerge stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

• Dr. Ebojele has his PhD in Public Administration and is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo

Edo scouts' visit to flyover highlights value of civic learning and nothing else

PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

The criticism of the visit by members of the Scout Association to the newly completed Ramat Park Flyover in Benin City by some on-air persons on *AriseTV* displayed complete ignorance about civic education, youth development, and public appreciation of infrastructure projects with due respect Ayo.

The discussion came up during the segment tagged 'Videos Trending' around the world.

The criticism suggested that the tour of the flyover in Benin City, the Edo State capital, by young Scouts who live in Edo State, was unworthy of recognition. It portrayed the exercise as an embarrassing celebration of a routine public project. However, such views overlook the educational purpose and broader significance of the visit because, for one, flyovers are not routine public projects. This particular flyover is the first in Edo State.

But thank God for Dr Rueben Abati for quickly intervening.

The critics were unaware that the Scout movement is built on principles of character development, leadership, community engagement, and practical learning. There is no way they would have known that the visit to the Ramat Park Flyover provided an opportunity for young people to witness firsthand a major infrastructure project within their city and understand how public investments affect everyday life.

It was learning by experience,

which remains one of the most effective methods of education. Rather than learning about governance and development only through textbooks, TV, movies and online, the Scouts were able to see a first hand, a completed project designed to improve transportation, ease traffic congestion, and enhance mobility within Benin City.

For many young people, exposure to modern infrastructure projects can be inspiring. Flyovers are still relatively uncommon in several parts of Nigeria, making them significant landmarks in the urban landscape. There should be no shame in young citizens taking pride in improvements within their communities. Instead, such experiences help strengthen their connection to their state and encourage greater civic awareness.

The Ramat Park Flyover in Benin City stands as one of the key infrastructure projects delivered under Governor Monday Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda. Beyond its physical structure, the project represents his commitment to improving public infrastructure and creating a more efficient transportation network for residents.

More importantly, the visit offered the young Scouts a useful lesson in citizenship. It demonstrated that public projects can move from promise to reality and that government actions can have visible and measurable effects on people's lives. These are important lessons for a generation that will eventually assume leadership

roles in society.

Constructive criticism of government projects remains essential to grow our democracy. Legitimate questions should focus on issues such as project quality, cost-effectiveness, engineering standards, maintenance plans, and whether the project achieves its intended objectives. Such scrutiny promotes accountability and good governance.

However, criticism directed at young people for visiting and learning about a completed public project misses the larger issue. The Scouts were not engaged in politics; they were participating in an educational exercise that broadened their understanding of development within their state.

The visit to the Ramat Park Flyover rather than being a source of embar-

assment, it reflected the importance of helping young people understand and appreciate the development taking place around them.

Dr. Ebojele has his PhD. in Public Administration and the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.



THE RAMAT PARK FLYOVER, BENIN CITY.

Gov Okpebholo inspects construction projects in Udomi, Esan Central in pix

The projects inspected include: Construction of a 150-bed space Edo Specialist Hospital, hostel accommodation, School of Nursing Sciences, Udomi Holiday Resort Center and others.



Sports

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

Cricket Federation wins ICC women's team award

The Nigeria Cricket Federation (NCF) has been named Africa's regional winner of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Associate Member Women's



NIGERIA CRICKET FEDERATION

Team Performance of the Year Award.

In a statement on Friday, the federation also received global recognition for its grassroots programmes and community engagement initiatives.

"The recognition followed the outstanding performances recorded by Nigeria's women's national cricket team during the year under review.

"The award highlights the steady growth and rising profile of women's cricket in Nigeria and across the African region.

"In another milestone, Nigeria received global recognition through the ICC Criio Cricket Festivals with Rexona initiative for expanding grassroots partic-

ipation and promoting community engagement through cricket.

"The initiative celebrated the country's commitment to developing the game and creating memorable cricket experiences for communities nationwide," the federation stated.

The NCF said the achievements reflected the dedication of players, coaches, administrators and stakeholders who had continued to support cricket development in the country.

It added that the recognitions would further motivate the federation to intensify efforts in nurturing talent, promoting women's cricket and strengthening grassroots programmes across Nigeria.

18 states confirm participation as NOC moves Olympic Day to July 4

The Sport-For-All Commission of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC) has announced the postponement of the 2026 Olympic Day celebration by one week.

The nationwide event, initially scheduled for Saturday, June 27, 2026, will now take place on Saturday, July 4, 2026.

The decision was reached during an emergency meeting of the Commission held on Friday, June 6, 2026. According to the organisers, the adjustment will provide participating states with additional time to adequately prepare for the event and eliminate scheduling conflicts and logistical challenges that could affect the smooth conduct of the

celebrations.

Olympic Day is an annual global initiative of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) designed to encourage mass participation in physical activities regardless of age, gender, or athletic ability. The programme promotes the Olympic values of excellence, friendship, and respect while advocating healthy and active lifestyles through non-competitive sporting activities.

Speaking during the meeting, Chairman of the NOC Sport-For-All Commission, Dr. Abdul Ibrahim, acknowledged the economic challenges facing stakeholders but urged members to remain committed to delivering a successful event.

2026 President Federation Cup: Yakmut hails Plateau United's resurgence after quarter-final qualification

Chairman of Plateau United Football Club, Alhassan Yakmut, has described the team's qualification for the quarter-finals of the 2026 President Federation Cup as evidence of the club's ongoing transformation.

Yakmut said this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja on Saturday after team defeated FC Basira 2-1 in a round of 16 encounter at the FIFA Goal Project Pitch of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

According to him, progressing to the last eight of the competition is a significant achievement considering the challenges the club faced at the start of the season.

"Moving from the round of 16 to the quarter-finals is a big achievement for us. We came into the season late and we had to build a competitive team under difficult circumstances.

"The challenges of the league made it difficult to assemble a strong squad initially, but now that we have stabilised the team, we are beginning to see encouraging performances in the President Federation

Cup," he said.

He said that the club's ambition is to reach the final while taking each game one step at a time.

"Our target is to reach the final, but we will take every match as it comes," he added.

Reflecting on the club's progress during the season, Yakmut recalled that Plateau United were struggling near the foot of the Nigeria Premier Football League table before staging a remarkable turnaround.



PLATEAU UNITED TEAM

Nigerian sprinter, Favour Ofili, returns strongly with Season's Best at Lone Star Grand Prix

Nigerian sprint star Favour Ofili produced a standout performance

on Sunday, clocking a season's best of 22.15 seconds to finish third in the women's 200 metres

at the Lone Star Grand Prix.

The 22-year-old, competing in just her second 200m race of the 2026 season, showed marked improvement from her opening outing, securing a podium spot against a strong international field.

Her time underlines a promising start to the campaign as she continues to build form ahead of major championships.

Olympic champion Gabby Thomas of the United States dominated the event, storming to victory with a world-leading time of 21.70 seconds.



FAVOUR OFILI

DR Congo faults Spain over cancellation of Chile friendly

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) has criticised the cancellation of its scheduled friendly match against Chile in Spain over concerns linked to the Ebola outbreak in the African country.

The match was due to be played on June 9 in La Linea de la Concepcion, southern Spain, but local authorities called it off on public health grounds.

Mayor of La Linea de la Concepcion, Juan Franco, announced that he had signed a decree banning the match following a recommendation from local health officials.

According to Franco, a report from the town's health service advised against staging the fixture because of potential health risks.

The DR Congo national

team has, however, been training in Belgium ahead of its World Cup campaign.

Reports indicate that none of the 26 players is based in DR Congo or travelled directly from the country to the training camp, although some support staff and supporters may have done so.

Reacting to the development, DR Congo's Minister of Communication, Patrick Muyaya,

described the decision as unfair.

Speaking during a virtual press conference organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), Muyaya said the cancellation had created difficulties for the national team's preparations.

He noted that the players had been training in Belgium for about three weeks and argued that the decision could be interpreted as discriminatory.



NIGERIA OLYMPIC COMMITTEE SIGNING

Brighton sign Nigerian sensation, Yohanna

English Premier League club Brighton and Hove Albion have announced the signing of young Nigerian forward, Zadok Yohanna from AIK Stockholm.

Brighton announced the signing of the highly-rated Nigerian young star in a post on the Club's Facebook page on Saturday.

The statement reads, "Brighton & Hove Albion have agreed the signing of Zadok Yohanna from AIK Stockholm on a five-year contract until June 2031

for undisclosed terms."

Zadok Yohanna turned down interest from numerous clubs including Chelsea, Manchester City and Newcastle to join Brighton.

The 18-year-old winger joined AIK Stockholm in 2025 from Ikon Allah Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria.

Yohanna's impressive performance saw him gaining instant promotion from AIK Stockholm's youth academy to the senior team within two months of joining the Swedish Club.



ZADOK YAHONNA

Sports



Commonwealth Games: Olopade assures Team Nigeria of strong support

National Sports Commission (NSC) Director-General, Bukola

Olopade, has reaffirmed the commission's commitment to ensuring adequate preparation, welfare and

support for Team Nigeria ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

Olopade spoke on Friday in Abuja after strategic meetings with sports federations, including American Flag Football, Karate and Mixed Martial Arts.

He described the engagements as productive and aimed at strengthening Nigeria's sporting ecosystem.

"Today has been a very busy day. We held meetings with several federations, and most of the discussions were successful.

"We are still working to resolve some outstanding issues with the Karate Federation. I am

confident a resolution will be reached very soon," he said.

Olopade said preparations for the Commonwealth Games and Nigeria's Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) campaign were key sporting priorities over the next two months.

According to him, the Federal Government, under President Bola Tinubu, has provided substantial support and funding for major international competitions.

"We have been working for several weeks and months on plans for the Commonwealth Games, while the Nigeria Football Federation is also preparing for WAFCON.



OLOPADE

Nasarawa Amazons, Rivers Angels claim early advantage in NWFL Super Six

The 2025/26 Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership Super Six got underway in Port Harcourt on Saturday with an action-packed Matchday One that produced thrilling contests, crucial victories and an early upset in the race for the super six title.

Three matches were played at the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium, with Nasarawa Amazons and Rivers Angels securing important wins, while defending champions Bayelsa Queens were held to a draw by impressive debutants Abia Angels.

Okah Fires Nasarawa Amazons Past Edo Queens

Nasarawa Amazons opened their Super Six campaign with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Edo Queens in a closely contested encounter.

Both sides battled for control in a tactical first half, but the breakthrough arrived shortly after the restart when Adaobi Okah struck in the 61st minute against her former club. The forward calmly converted her opportunity to hand Christopher Danjuma's side a valuable lead.

Edo Queens pushed forward in search of an equaliser, but Nasarawa Amazons remained organised defensively and successfully protected their advantage to secure all three points.

Rivers Angels Edge Robo Queens in Five-Goal Thriller

The standout fixture of the day saw Rivers Angels claim a dramatic 3-2 victory over FC Robo Queens in an entertaining contest.

The hosts took an early lead through Grace Saliu in the eighth minute before Oluwakemi Adegbuyi restored parity for Robo Queens midway through the first half.

Rivers Angels regained control after the break, with Abasiofon Uwah putting her side ahead in the 65th minute. Two minutes later, Ramotalahi Kareem extended the lead to give the Port Harcourt-based side a comfortable cushion.

Adegbuyi completed her brace in the 80th minute to set up a tense finish, but Rivers Angels held firm to claim a crucial opening-day win.



NASARAWA AMAZONS

Fake agents biggest threat to African football academies, lawyer warns

International sports lawyer, Abiodun Sonaike, has warned that fake football agents and scammers have become one of the greatest threats to football academies and amateur clubs in Africa.

Sonaike, a Partner at Lithos

Legal Consult, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Saturday that the activities of fraudulent agents were damaging player development and undermining trust within the sport.

"One of the biggest threats

facing football academies and amateur clubs in Africa today is not a lack of talent, but the emergence of fake agents and football scammers," he said.

According to him, academy owners frequently receive messages from individuals claiming to have connections with clubs in Europe, Asia and other foreign destinations.

He said the fraudsters often send fake invitation letters and forge transfer documents in attempts to obtain large sums of money from unsuspecting victims.

"They go as far as posing with ex-internationals to create a false impression of influence and even clone the social media accounts of genuine agents," Sonaike said.



FOOTBALL ACADEMY IN TRAINING

Anambra Sports Commissioner rallies stakeholders, urges continued support

Patrick-Agha Mba, Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development in Anambra has called for continued collaboration and support for the ministry which he said was crucial to the realisation of the objectives of the state government in the sector.

He appreciated stakeholders in the sports sector for their contributions to development of sports in the state.

Mba stated this on Saturday in Awka during a Luncheon with philanthropists, chairmen of sports associations and the media who had supported the growth and development of

sports in the state.

He called for continued collaboration and support for the ministry which he said was crucial to the realisation of the objectives of the state government on the sector under the new bottom-up development approach.

Mba said he would be accountable and open to constructive criticism in the collective pursuit of sports excellence.

"This is just to thank you for all that you have been doing towards the development of sports in Anambra over the years,

Wrestling: Team Nigeria wins one silver, two bronze in Mongolia

Team Nigeria wins one silver and two bronze, concluding its competition at the ongoing Ulaanbaatar 2026 United World Wrestling (UWW) 3rd Ranking Series on Saturday in Mongolia.

Hannah Ojo and Esther Kolawole won silver and bronze in their categories.

Ojo and Kolawole have joined Christianah Ogunsanya in securing medals at the ongoing competition.

The championship allows athletes to earn crucial seeding points for upcoming global championships.

Nigeria's Ojo put up a 10-0 superlative display against Mongolian Tuvshinjargal Tarav to set up a semi-final clash with Priya of India, who she later beat 5-1.

However, the reigning African champion's impressive run came to an end, losing to Kajal

of India 0-8 in the final to settle for silver.

Earlier, Kolawole won a bronze medal for Nigeria after she overwhelmed Huan Yang of China 10-0.

Kolawole made a statement of intent in her run to the bronze medal match, upsetting Russian world number one, Amina Tandelova 6-0.

She lost narrowly to world silver medalist, Kim Ok-ju of North Korea 4-5.

Team Nigeria concluded the Ranking Series Tournament with one silver and two bronze, totalling three medals from four athletes that represented the country.

Four female wrestlers represented the country in different categories: Mercy Genesis 50kg; Tolulope Ogunsanya 53kg; Esther Kolawole 62kg and Hannah Ojo 76kg.



HANNAH OJO AND ESTHER KOLAWOLE

Nigeria wins first medal at World Wrestling Ranking Series in Mongolia



CHRISTIANAH OGUNSANYA

Reigning African champion, Christianah Ogunsanya, has secured Nigeria's first medal at the ongoing 3rd United World Wrestling (UWW) Ranking Series tournament in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Ogunsanya won a bronze medal on Friday after defeating Mongolia's Bayanmunkh 6-6

on technical criteria.

The tournament, tagged the Ulaanbaatar Open, is one of the UWW Ranking Series events and attracts top wrestlers from across the world seeking to improve their rankings and seeding points.

Ogunsanya began her campaign impressively, defeating Mongolia's Tsovoov Gankhuy-

ag 10-0 by superiority before losing 10-0 by superiority to Japan's Kiyooka M. in her next bout.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth champion Mercy Genesis narrowly missed out on a podium finish after losing 2-7 to Turkey's Evin Demirhan.

Reacting to the performance, Nigeria's women wres-

ling coach, Purity Akuh, expressed gratitude for the achievement and praised the athletes' efforts.

"First and foremost, I give thanks to Almighty God for this medal.

"This medal proves that Nigeria can compete with the world's leading wrestling nations and elite athletes.



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FEATURE



Peter Obi's European detour is a gift to Tinubu and a warning to Nigeria

KIO AMACHREE

While over 1,100 Nigerians were kidnapped in four months and schoolchildren died in the bush, the President campaigned for 2027. The opposition went to Strasbourg. Someone has to explain why.

There is a familiar and troubling ritual in Nigerian politics — the pilgrimage abroad to seek the endorsement of foreign galleries before earning the mandate of the Nigerian street. Bola Ahmed Tinubu performed it at Chatham House in 2023, bowing and scraping before a British audience that would decide nothing about Nigeria's presidency. Now Peter Obi, the man his followers believe is Nigeria's last salvation, has taken himself to the European Parliament in Strasbourg to discuss "sustainable development and democratic consolidation" while the nation he wishes to lead burns from within.

Let us be clear: Obi's trip to the EU was not a scandal. Meeting foreign lawmakers is normal political activity. But timing is everything in politics, and the optics of an opposition presidential aspirant addressing European committees on Africa's future while teachers are beheaded in Oyo State, while bandits roam northern highways with military impunity, and while Tinubu's machine quietly blankets all 8,809 polling wards with reelection structures — that timing is either tone-deaf or strategically reckless.

The most dangerous political misreading in Nigeria today is the belief that Tinubu is weak. The assumption — fuelled by social media ridicule, viral stumbles, and relentless Obidient optimism — is that this is a spent and failing man who will fall of his own weight. That assumption is wrong, and indulging it may cost Nigeria its next election before a single ballot is cast. Tinubu is not sleepwalking toward 2027. He is running toward it with the full machinery of the Nigerian state behind him. He has already secured his APC ticket, reportedly with over 10 million ward-level votes, against a challenger who received fewer than seventeen thousand. He has placed the crown upon his head and he will not remove it voluntarily. Those who believe otherwise are confusing social media sentiment for political reality — a mistake Nigerians have made before, to devastating effect.

"Tinubu did not win in 2023 because he was loved. He won because he was organized, ruthless, and certain. His opposition was none of those things. Nothing has changed."*

The warnings are now coming from within the President's own political



PETER OBI

BOLA AHMED TINUBU

family. Babachir Lawal, the former Secretary-General of the Federation and one-time Tinubu ally, stated bluntly this week that if rigging determines the 2027 outcome, Tinubu will win easily — describing him as the "master rigger." That is not opposition propaganda. That is a man who knows the machine telling you how the machine works. Nigeria's electoral history offers no reason to doubt him.

Meanwhile, the security situation has crossed from crisis into catastrophe. At least 1,100 Nigerians were kidnapped in the first four months of 2026 alone. Nigeria now ranks as the fourth most terrorism-affected nation on earth according to the 2026 Global Terrorism Index. The Yoruba Union, once a pillar of Tinubu's political base in the southwest, has formally declared that "Tinubu should resign or forget 2027" — accusing him of meeting each new atrocity with a scripted condemnation while his support groups mobilize grassroots reelection structures. A former aide put it with surgical precision: every inch of Nigeria is now

vulnerable. The insurgency is coordinated, well-resourced, and spreading southward. It does not behave like a domestic criminal enterprise. It behaves like something with a logistics chain, international reach, and a strategic purpose. Whatever its origins, its beneficiaries include those who profit from a broken Nigerian state.

"The DEA and FBI files have not appeared because Washington is not finished using its asset. But the courts are closing in. Negotiation is now happening behind closed doors."*

Into this landscape, Peter Obi must choose what kind of candidate he intends to be. The Obidient faithful will vote for him regardless. That base is not the problem. The problem is the vast, furious, exhausted majority of Nigerians who are not yet persuaded that he is the answer — who remember 2023, who watched their votes apparently counted in reverse, and who need more than economic competence and European photo opportunities to believe that this time will be different. Obi's one-term pledge,

which he continues to repeat, lands nowhere. No serious presidential candidate in modern democratic history has proposed self-limitation as an electoral platform. It signals either naivety about power or a reluctance to commit to the full weight of what governing Nigeria requires. It must be retired immediately.

"The Obidients will vote for him. That is not the problem. The problem is the silent, furious majority who need a reason to believe the count will mean something."*

What Obi must become — and has not yet become — is the kind of candidate who makes Tinubu uncomfortable. Not an annoyance. Not a technocrat with impressive spreadsheets. A genuine political threat. That requires returning to Nigeria, not to hold rallies for the converted, but to be present in the places where anger is sharpest and hope is most depleted. It requires a speech — not a well-organized policy address, but the speech of speeches — that tells Nigerians not what government should

look like in theory, but why this specific regime has failed them in blood and treasure, and why he, specifically, will not. It requires abandoning the gentleman's code when the opponent is not playing by gentlemen's rules. Tinubu is not laughing with Peter Obi. He is laughing at him. That distinction must be understood before January 2027.

If the opposition arrives at the election dispersed, diplomatically courteous, and strategically outmaneuvered, what follows will not be an election in any meaningful sense. It will be a declaration, ratified by a compromised process and imposed on a population that has no organized leadership to channel its outrage. The streets will erupt. There will be no Peter Obi to lead the protests, because Peter Obi would have been in Strasbourg talking about democratic consolidation.

Nigeria deserves better. So does Peter Obi, who is capable of better. The question is whether he understands that the clock is already running — and that Tinubu's machine never stopped.