

# Insecurity: Schools in Akoko Edo shut by govt, police halt rallies in Osun

**BENIN CITY**  
The Edo State Government has announced the immediate closure of schools in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area with immediate effect  
The schools are Ososo

Grammar School, Ososo, Ososo Comprehensive High School, Ososo and Makeke Secondary School, Makeke.  
A press statement signed by Dr. Patrick Ebojele, Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to Governor Monday Okpebholo disclosed that the decision is part of the

government's commitment to safeguarding the lives and property of citizens, particularly students, teachers, and school personnel.  
According to the statement, All academic and non-academic activities in the affected schools are suspended with immediate

effect, pending further directives from the government.  
"Students currently sitting for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) will be allowed access to their examination centres under strict security arrangements coordinated by school author-

ities, security agencies, and community leaders.  
"Principals of the affected schools are directed to ensure the safe and orderly release of students to their parents and guardians; secure all school facilities, equipment, and property throughout the closure

period; and maintain regular communication with the Edo State Government, the Chief Inspector of Education, and relevant security agencies.  
Strictly comply with any additional directives issued by  
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# The Nigerian OBSERVER

*That The People May Know*

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# Xenophobic attacks: Nigeria to pull about 1,000 citizens out of S/Africa

● **FG mobilizes high-level reception as 270 Nigerians return today amid tension**

AISHA MOMOH AND CAROLINE AMEH  
**ABUJA**

Nigeria has moved to bring home hundreds of its citizens from South Africa and Libya following attacks abroad and failed

migration attempts.  
The first Air Peace evacuation flight from Johannesburg will touch down at Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, at about 5:00 a.m. this Thursday, June 11, 2026. On board will be 270 Nigerians who opted for voluntary return after

renewed xenophobic incidents targeted foreign nationals in parts of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. The Federal Government covered all costs for the airlift.  
According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this flight is the first of five approved evacuation trips. Ministry spokesperson

Kimiebi Ebienfa said over 1,094 Nigerians have now registered to return from South Africa, a sharp jump from the 130 who initially signed up before the latest unrest. Screening for eligibility ran through Wednesday, June 10, and involved officials from Nigeria's Foreign

Ministry, South African immigration, and the police.  
South African authorities agreed to waive fines for visa overstays to speed up departures. However, returnees with pending criminal charges will not be cleared to leave.  
Furthermore, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, condemned the violence and pushed back against claims that only undocumented migrants

are affected. She stated that Nigerians with valid residence and work permits have also been harassed and had businesses vandalized. Two Nigerians were reportedly assaulted by security personnel during the clashes.  
"Nigeria made huge sacrifices for South Africa's liberation. It is painful to see our citizens attacked despite that history," Odumegwu-Ojukwu said. She added that diplomatic relations are strained, and Nigeria is weighing further action if the  
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**LIBYA RETURNEES:**  
The arrival of chartered airline that brought 182 returnees from Libya at the MMA, Lagos.

## Edo Govt defends devt projects, dismisses claims of unpaid teachers

**BENIN CITY**

The Edo State Government has dismissed reports alleging that teachers in the state are being owed salaries, describing such claims as misleading and politically motivated.  
Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, made the clarification on Wednesday during a ministerial briefing in Benin, where he addressed a wide range of issues relating to governance, infrastructure development and public service delivery under the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Afegbua said the government had consistently prioritized the welfare of teachers and other public servants, noting that over 5,000 teachers had been recruited by the present administration to strengthen the state's education sector.  
He maintained that any isolated case of salary non-payment should be investigated on its merits rather than being generalized as a government policy.  
According to him, those spreading reports that teachers were being owed salaries were deliberately attempting to misinform the public and tarnish  
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## Senate orders Kyari's arrest over alleged ₦210tn discrepancies

CAROLINE AMEH  
**ABUJA**

The Senate Committee on Public Accounts on Wednesday ordered the

arrest of former Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), Mele Kyari, following his failure to appear before lawmakers investigating alleged financial discrepancies amounting to ₦210 trillion in the corporation's accounts between 2017 and 2023.  
The dramatic directive came during a heated investigative

session where senators expressed frustration over Kyari's repeated absence despite several invitations extended to him  
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**Senate probes spending of SEDC N16.6bn allocation**  
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**EDSG engages 500 Forest Guards, undergoes training to strengthen security**  
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**Manhunt under way in South Africa after 12 killed in mass shooting in Johannesburg**  
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**As the 2026 World Cup begins today in America let's check the history, past winners**  
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# Gov Okpebholo vows partnership with Environment Ministry to protect Edo's ecosystem

## BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has pledged to work closely with the Federal Ministry of Environment to protect and preserve the state's environment, assuring that his administration will take decisive steps to address environ-

mental challenges, including encroachment into national parks.

The governor made the commitment when the Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, paid him a courtesy visit at Government House in Benin City.

Addressing the minister and his delegation, Okpebholo

said environmental protection remains a key priority of his administration, noting that sustainable management of natural resources is critical to the state's development.

He disclosed that the state government would establish a committee to tackle the growing problem of encroachment in national parks and other protected areas.

"The Edo State Government is ready to partner with the Federal Ministry of Environ-

ment to protect our environment and ensure sustainable development for our people."

The governor assured the minister of his administration's readiness to collaborate with the federal government on policies and programmes aimed at safeguarding the environment. He stressed the need for collective action to protect forests, wildlife and other natural resources from degradation, adding that Edo State would continue to pay significant attention to environmental issues.

Okpebholo noted that preserving the environment is essential for the well-being of

present and future generations, pledging the support of his government for initiatives that promote environmental sustainability and conservation.

Earlier, the Minister of Environment thanked the governor for receiving him and his entourage, commending him for his continuous support for environmental programs in the state.

Lawal described Edo as a leading state in environmental management, revealing that the state has a Forestry Commission, which he said is the first of its kind in Nigeria.

"Edo State has a Forestry

Commission, which is the first of its kind in Nigeria, and this demonstrates the state's commitment to environmental sustainability."

Lawal expressed concern over the increasing threat of deforestation, warning that the indiscriminate felling of trees poses serious environmental and economic consequences.

The visit underscored the commitment of both the Federal Ministry of Environment and the Edo State Government to strengthen cooperation in tackling environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development.

## Xenophobic attacks: Nigeria to pull...

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attacks persist.

The High Commission in Pretoria worked with South African officials to allow Nigerians with minor immigration issues to board the flight instead of being detained. Officials say the exercise reflects the Federal Government of Nigeria's commitment to protecting citizens abroad, even as it presses Pretoria to enforce law and order.

In addition, while the South Africa airlift begins, another group of stranded Nigerians arrived from Libya last week. A chartered airline brought 182 people, mainly young men and women, back to MMIA Lagos, making the total number of voluntary returnees 65,700 since 2017. The present returnees consist of 108 adult females, 45 adult males, and 17 children, including 12 infants. However, the IOM disclosed that two of the 17 children returned unaccompanied.

Rehabilitation plans are in motion for the new arrivals, with support from federal agencies and state governments, especially in southern states where most returnees originate. The evacuations highlight ongoing risks Nigerians face overseas, from xenophobia to dangerous migration paths. They also come as the Federal Government tries to reshape its relationship with the diaspora.

The Bank of Industry and NiDCOM are rolling out a new initiative to channel an estimated \$35 billion in annual diaspora remittances into direct investment projects at home. A dedicated Diaspora desk and online portal will offer guidance, technical support, and fraud protection for citizens abroad looking to invest.

NiDCOM Chairman, Dr. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, has repeatedly urged Nigerians abroad to register with embassies and use official channels for complaints. She noted that moving from "remittances for consumption" to "remittances for investment" can help build jobs and infrastructure back home.

For the returnees who landed from Libya, the next phase is adjusting back home. Many left Nigeria years ago in search of work and better pay, including those that attempted Mediterranean crossings that stalled in detention centres. Others in South Africa built small businesses that were looted during the attacks. Government officials say counselling, skills training, and small

business support will be offered to ease reintegration. States with high returnee numbers have been asked to partner with NEMA on rehabilitation programs.

Four more Air Peace flights are scheduled in the coming days to complete the South Africa evacuation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said departure times depend on final clearance and capacity at MMIA, but that all registered volunteers will be accommodated.

The situation has also reignited debate about migration safety and diplomatic protection. As Nigeria pushes South Africa to secure foreign nationals, advocacy groups are calling for stronger consular services and faster responses when citizens are attacked abroad. For now, the focus is on safe arrival and recovery. Families gathered at MMIA to welcome relatives.

Updates on the next flights and on assistance programs for returnees will be released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NiDCOM as the operation continues.

Meanwhile, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to personally receive evacuees at Lagos airport; screening exercise extended as government expands repatriation efforts

The Federal Government has intensified its response to the ongoing xenophobic tensions in South Africa with the scheduled arrival of 268 Nigerian nationals on a special evacuation flight, as the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sola Enikanolaiye, is expected to personally receive the returnees on behalf of the government.

The evacuation flight, operated by Air Peace Airlines, is scheduled to arrive at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos at about 5:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 11, 2026.

According to a statement issued on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Kimiebi Imomotimi Ebienua, the Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria in Pretoria, Ambassador Alexander Ajayi, will escort the evacuees from South Africa and formally hand them over to the Minister upon arrival in Lagos.

The Ministry explained that the exercise underscores the Federal Government's commitment to the protection and welfare of Nigerians in the diaspora, describing it as a key pillar of the country's foreign policy. It also reaffirmed that citizens' safety and dignity remain central to ongoing diplomatic engagements.

## Senate orders Kyari's arrest over alleged ₦210tn...

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by the committee.

However, former NNPC Chief Financial Officer, Umar Ajiya Isa, strongly rejected claims that ₦210 trillion was unaccounted for, insisting that no money was missing from the national oil company during the period under review.

According to Ajiya, the figure being cited by lawmakers far exceeds the total revenue generated by the corporation within the same timeframe.

"To be clear, if money had gone missing at NNPC during our tenure, we would not have had the courage to publish audited accounts," he told the committee.

"For over 40 years, those accounts were either not prepared, not made public, or not even shared with the Auditor-General. The ₦210 trillion being mentioned is an enormous sum.

NNPC's total revenue during the period was about ₦54.5 trillion before production costs. It is impossible for ₦210 trillion to be missing or unaccounted for."

The committee's decision to issue a warrant for Kyari's arrest followed a debate among members over whether to grant him another opportunity to appear before the panel.

Senators Saliu Mustapha (Kwara Central) and Tony Nwoye (Anambra North) urged the committee to exercise restraint, informing members that Kyari was reportedly receiving medical treatment in Germany.

Their plea, however, met stiff opposition from other lawmakers.

Senator Abdul Ningi (Bauchi Central) argued that the committee could not rely on verbal explanations regarding Kyari's health condition and demanded documentary evidence.

Senator Victor Umeh (Anam-

bra Central) subsequently moved a motion for the issuance of a warrant of arrest, insisting that the committee could no longer tolerate repeated absences.

Supporting the motion, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Senator Peter Nwaebonyi (Ebonyi North), said the panel had already held nine meetings on the matter and could not continue postponing its work.

"This is the ninth time this committee is meeting on the 19 audit queries raised against NNPC by the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation, three of which were chaired by me," Nwaebonyi said.

"The time to issue a warrant of arrest against Mele Kyari is now because the committee must conclude its assignment and report back to the Senate."

Following a voice vote, Committee Chairman Senator Ibrahim Dankwambo (Gombe

North) directed security agencies to ensure Kyari's appearance before the panel.

"Anywhere Mele Kyari is, he should be arrested and brought before this committee," Dankwambo declared.

Responding to other allegations contained in the audit queries, Ajiya also dismissed claims that ₦5.8 billion was spent to facilitate the registration of NNPC Limited, describing the accusation as false and damaging.

He challenged the committee to verify the facts with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Federal Inland Revenue Service, now known as the Nigeria Revenue Service.

The former CFO warned that unsubstantiated allegations against strategic national institutions could damage Nigeria's international reputation and negatively affect investor confidence.

## Insecurity: Schools in Akoko Edo shut by govt, police halt...

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the government.

The Governor advised parents, guardians, and residents of the affected communities to remain calm, vigilant, and cooperate fully with security agencies as efforts are intensified to maintain peace and ensure public safety.

"The Edo State Government assures the public that all necessary measures are being taken to address the situation and restore normal academic activities as soon as conditions permit."

**OSOGBO:** The Police Command in Osun has directed political parties to suspend their

planned rallies in Oriade Local Government Area of the state to prevent a possible outbreak of violence.

This is contained in a statement issued by the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Abiodun Ojelabi, on Tuesday in Osogbo.

Ojelabi advised political parties to reschedule rallies earlier planned for Wednesday in the area, citing security concerns.

"The command wishes to advise all political parties, candidates, supporters and stakeholders to postpone their planned political gatherings, rallies, cam-

paigns and processions scheduled to hold on Wednesday in Oriade Local Government Area to a new date.

"This advice is based on credible intelligence and prevailing security concerns within the local government area," he said.

The police spokesperson noted that the directive was also informed by the non-cooperative attitude of some political actors, adding that efforts by the command to broker peace ended in a deadlock.

He further disclosed that a peace meeting earlier scheduled by the Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Gotan, with

the concerned political parties could not hold.

Ojelabi said the directive was a proactive measure to prevent any breach of peace and breakdown of law and order, as well as to safeguard lives and property in the area.

"All political parties, candidates, supporters, followers and members of the public are hereby urged to comply in the interest of peace," he said.

He reiterated the command's commitment to ensuring a peaceful and secure environment, urging residents to remain law-abiding and cooperate with security agencies.

## Edo Govt defends devt projects, dismisses claims of...

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the image of the administration.

He challenged individuals with genuine complaints to provide specific details to enable the government investigate and address such cases.

The commissioner also defended the government's extensive infrastructure projects across the state, particularly in rural communities, saying the administration was committed to ensuring balanced development in all parts of Edo State.

He noted that critics had questioned projects being executed in

some communities but argued that government had a responsibility to provide infrastructure wherever the need existed.

Afegbua said Governor Okpebholo's development agenda was not limited to urban centres but extended to villages, hamlets and agrarian communities.

He cited the construction of roads and other critical infrastructure as part of efforts to improve accessibility, stimulate economic activities and enhance the quality of life of residents.

He explained that opening up rural areas would attract investors, especially in agri-

culture and agro-processing, thereby creating jobs and boosting economic growth.

According to him, improved road networks would make it easier for farmers and businesses to access markets and expand their operations.

The commissioner stressed that the administration's development strategy covered all the 18 local government areas of the state, adding that government policies were designed to serve the collective interests of Edo people irrespective of their political affiliations or social status.

He noted that democracy

was about improving the welfare of the people and creating an enabling environment for citizens to pursue their individual and collective aspirations.

He added that the government had continued to invest billions of naira in projects spread across the three senatorial districts of the state.

Also speaking during the briefing, the Commissioner for Public Safety and Security, Hon. Festus Ebea, urged residents to support ongoing efforts to combat criminality, particularly kidnapping and drug-related offences.

# World Food Safety Day 2026: Edo Govt drives digital innovation for food safety and agriculture

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy has reaffirmed its commitment to leveraging technology to advance food safety and agricultural development in the state.

The ministry partnered with

the Foodpreneurship Development and Innovation Hub to commemorate the 2026 World Food Safety Day celebration held at the John Odigie Oye-gun Public Service Academy, Benin City.

The event brought together policymakers, agricultural stakeholders, innovators and

development partners to explore technology-driven solutions to food safety challenges.

Representing the Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy, Hon. Ohimai Ehijimeton, the Functioning Director, Department of E-Governance and Digital Services, Mr. Donatus Igiekhume,

delivered a keynote address highlighting the role of digital innovation in strengthening food safety systems and boosting agricultural productivity.

Mr. Igiekhume said digital technologies can enhance food traceability, improve monitoring and quality assurance processes, provide farmers

with access to real-time information, and support evidence-based decision-making across the agricultural value chain. He stressed that innovation remains critical to building a safer, more resilient and sustainable food system.

The Host and Scientist, National Business Development Service Provider (NBDS), Mrs. Ihedimma Kawekwune, spoke on unsafe food culture, highlighting the importance of partnering with the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy to adopt a technology-driven approach in address-

ing food safety challenges.

Also at the event, a clinical pharmacist, Mrs. Ogbeide Isioma, raised concern over the rising burden of food-borne illnesses in Nigeria, noting that about 50 million cases are recorded annually.

The World Food Safety Day celebration, themed "Driving Digital Innovation for Food Safety and Agriculture," featured keynote presentations, product exhibitions, networking sessions and the Food Tech Incubator Awards.

Participants advocated stronger collaboration among government, technology innovators and agricultural stakeholders to promote food security and public health.



## AWARD:

Acting Chairman, Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State, Hon. Eric Osawaru, represented by the councils HOD, Environment, received World Environment Day 2026 Award as part of the activities to commemorate this year's celebration by Centre for Clean Energy and Environment Advocacy Initiative in collaboration with Edo State Ministry of Environment and Sustainability in Benin City on Wednesday.

## Gas distribution critical to energy solutions in Nigeria —Shell

### ABUJA

Shell Nigeria Gas (SNG) has been sharing its experiences as it pioneered gas distribution nearly 30 years ago, saying the expansion of pipeline natural gas infrastructure and the market-making role of gas distributors have been critical in moving gas from a policy aspiration to a practical energy solution for Nigerian industries.

"When SNG started in Agbara-Ota over 20 years ago, demand was nowhere near what it is today," recalled Managing Director Ralph Gbobo at a panel session on "Building a Bankable Gas Distribution Ecosystem: Infrastructure, Capital and Market Demand" at the 2nd business forum of the Association of Lo-

cal Distributors of Gas (ALDG) in Abuja. Ralph who was represented by Head, Gas Distribution, Chukwuka Amos-Ejesi said: "The economics was not perfect, but there was a leap of faith anchored on Nigeria's industrialisation trajectory. That decision has proven right."

He said SNG's persistence proved that when demand ambition, supply certainty, enabling infrastructure, and commercial clarity come together, even if not perfectly at the start, it creates industrial lusters that can grow and attract long-term capital. "Sustainability and bankability emerge over time, as utilization deepens and confidence builds," he pointed out.

The theme of the forum was "From Gas Abundance to Gas

Access: Reassessing Nigeria's Gas Distribution Imperatives," with industry leaders and other stakeholders discussing the use of gas to drive industrialisation. The panel session agreed on the need for "clear, supportive and credible policy frameworks, especially measures designed to improve the use of gas"

Ralph noted: "The introduction of gas-focused policies, notably the Petroleum Industry Act, marked a turning point. By reinforcing the role of gas in Nigeria's energy and industrial strategy and embedding instruments such as the Network Code- a critical framework that governs the operations of the Domestic Gas market and ensures transparency and stability, and the Domestic Gas Supply Obligation which compels gas producers to allocate gas to the domestic market, the PIA sig-

nificantly reduced policy ambiguity around gas development."

He added: "The introduction of clearer pricing frameworks for gas supply and transportation and a more transparent and competitive licensing regime, has also strengthened market confidence. Together, these measures have improved producer confidence, particularly for domestic gas projects, and signaled government's strong commitment to gas as a driver of industrial development."

Incorporated in 1998 as a fully Shell-owned gas distribution company, SNG currently serves over 150 clients in Abia, Bayelsa, Ogun and Rivers states, partnering with governments and other stakeholders to take the cleaner and more affordable energy to the doorsteps of industries. In the first half of this year alone, the

## Bizarre: Housewife steals 2 babies ahead of thanksgiving service

BENEDICT OKATE

### ASABA

Men of the Delta State police command have arrested a middle-aged woman in Delta State, Nigeria for allegedly stealing two babies from different mothers.

The State Police command's Spokesperson, Bright Edefe, a Superintendent of Police (SP) stated in a video shared on her social media handle on Tuesday.

His words: "I am SP Edefe Bright, and this is the Delta State Police Command. I remember one time the command did a video about how parents should be watchful and mindful of their children. The Police cannot be everywhere at the same time whether we accept that as a reality or not."

"About three days ago, we had a very disturbing report about a woman who came in and said she wanted to buy groundnuts. While they were looking for the groundnuts for her, she somehow misled the 14-year-old who was holding a baby and she went away with a four-month-old baby."

"Prior to the abduction of this child, she had done it a week ago or two weeks ago thereabout. She went to a roadside person that sells tickets and told her that she's asking about a house help. She established a relationship with the 18-year-old girl that had a child. Then one day she

said, 'Let me help you carry this baby and buy sweets from there.' She ran away.

"Tell me how a mother would give her child to a stranger to carry a three-month-old child. She was trying to manufacture twins in her own way. She kept them in her house in Uzere", Edefe added.

The suspect, who identified herself as Joy, confessed that she resorted to stealing the children after allegedly losing her own twin babies.

Hear her: "I got pregnant and had twin children. When they were one month and two weeks old, I left them to go to the market. Before I came back, they had used cold water to bathe the twins and they both died."

"My husband had already invited people for child dedication, so I decided to steal two children, a boy and a girl."

"I stole the first baby three weeks ago and later stole the other one on Saturday because the dedication was on Sunday", she stated.

According to the woman, she carried out the heinous act to cover shame as the husband had already informed the church that they were coming for child dedication/Thanksgiving service in few days time.

Police source revealed that investigation is on-going towards ascertaining the level of involvement of the husband and other persons in the crime.

## North-West Governors unveil poverty reduction plans

### KANO

The North-West Governors' Forum (NWGF) has convened a high-level policy dialogue in Kano on reducing multidimensional poverty through scaled social protection systems and innovative financing.

The summit, which drew policymakers, development partners, and technical experts from across the seven North-West states, focused on devis-

ing practical and sustainable strategies to tackle the drivers of multidimensional poverty.

Our correspondent reports that the conclave paid particular attention to children, women, and other vulnerable groups in the North-West.

Declaring the dialogue open held on Kano, Gov. Abba Yusuf said social protection should be treated not merely as a welfare measure but as a strategic investment in human capital, social stability, and economic growth.

Represented by his deputy, Murtala Sule-Garo, Yusuf highlighted Kano State's steps to institutionalise social protection, including the 2025 Social Protection Policy Law and the establishment of the Social Protection Directorate under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation.

He said: "The state continues to invest in education, healthcare, skills acquisition, youth empowerment, and other social intervention programmes aimed

at improving living standards.

"Addressing the scale of poverty and vulnerability across the region requires a shift from fragmented interventions to comprehensive, integrated, and data-driven social protection systems that are transparent, accountable, and reach those most in need."

In her welcome address, NWGF Director-General, Maryam Yahaya described the dialogue as a defining moment for the region.

She added that in spite of

its population, human capital, and economic potential, the North-West still faces high multidimensional poverty, poor health outcomes, insecurity, and a growing number of out-of-school children.

According to her, these challenges cross state boundaries and demand coordinated regional responses, urging that social protection should be seen as an investment in stability, productivity, and the future of the region.

Yahaya noted that the NWGF

had adopted the North-West Peace, Security and Development Framework to tackle fragility and accelerate human development by linking peace, security, economic growth, and social wellbeing.

Delivering a goodwill message, UNICEF Deputy Representative, Dr Rownak Khan highlighted severe challenges facing children in the North-West, including high maternal mortality, malnutrition, stunting, and limited access to essential services.

**NEWS****Senate probes spending of SEDC N16.6bn allocation****ABUJA**

The Senate Committee on the South East Development Commission (SEDC) on Tuesday subjected the Commission's Managing Director, Mr. Mark Okoye, to intense scrutiny over the management of N16.6 billion received from the 2025 federal budget, raising concerns over alleged financial mismanagement and questionable expenditures.

During an investigative hearing in Abuja, lawmakers expressed outrage over portions of the commission's financial report, particularly a reported expenditure of N153 million on the rent of a one-room liaison office in Abuja and another N2.5 billion listed as "imprest expenditure."

The committee, chaired by Senator Orji Uzor Kalu, described the financial records

submitted by the commission as inadequate and unacceptable, insisting that every naira spent from the allocation must be properly accounted for.

Tension rose during the session as committee members queried the SEDC management over the utilisation of funds released to the agency since December last year.

Senator Kalu disclosed that information obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria indicated that only N13 billion remained in the commission's account out of the N16.6 billion released, suggesting that approximately N3.6 billion had already been expended.

"This committee is disappointed with the financial report presented to us. It is completely unacceptable," Kalu said.

The lawmaker maintained that the commission must

provide detailed explanations for all expenditures incurred so far, stressing that transparency and accountability were non-negotiable.

Other members of the committee, including Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, Senator Victor Umeh and Senator Austin Akobundu, also faulted the financial report and demanded greater clarity on the commis-

sion's spending.

Responding to the lawmakers' concerns, Okoye defended the commission's financial decisions, insisting that all expenditures had been made prudently and in line with available resources.

According to him, the commission had deliberately adopted a cautious approach to project execution to avoid cre-

ating unfunded liabilities.

"Our approach has been to ensure that available resources are directed towards priority projects. We want allocations to guide the procurement process so that contracts awarded can be backed by available funding," he said.

He added that having a budgetary provision did not automatically translate into

having the full cash backing required for project execution.

"It would be irresponsible to award contracts worth the entire budget if only a fraction of the funds has been released. Doing so would create unfunded liabilities and a significant financial deficit," he stated.

However, lawmakers remained unconvinced by the explanation.

**Man arraigned for allegedly stealing AK-47 rifle, ammunition from police****ADO-EKITI**

A 32-year-old man, Ayegbusi Yemi, was on Wednesday docked in an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly stealing an AK-47 rifle from the Police.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecution Counsel, Insp Elijah Adejare, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on May 21 at about 10p.m. in Ado-Ekiti.

Adejare alleged that the defendant stole an AK-47 rifle bearing serial number KO35-357532 and 30 rounds of live ammunition worth five million Naira from Insp. Musa Saliu, property

of the Nigeria Police Force.

The prosecutor said that the defendant was arrested by the police.

According to him, the offence contravenes the provisions of Section 302(1)(a) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The Defence Counsel, Mr Gbenga Ariyibi, prayed the court to admit Yemi to bail, promising that he will not jump bail.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Kehinde Awosika, admitted the defendant to bail with two sureties.

Magistrate Awosika ordered that one of the sureties must be a relative, who has landed properties.

She adjourned the case until June 21, for hearing.

**NDC moves to resolve Kano dispute****ABUJA**

The leadership of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) says it is intensifying efforts to resolve internal disagreements in Kano State following a closed-door meeting with leaders of the Kwankwasiya movement.

This is contained in a statement issued by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Osa Director in Abuja.

The Director said the delegation of the national leadership of the Kwankwasiya movement met with the party's national leader, Sen. Seriake Dickson and the NDC leadership.

The meeting was convened to address issues between the Kwankwasiya movement and legacy NDC officials in Kano State.

The party leadership is seeking to foster unity, inclusion and broader participation among members.

According to Director, Dickson and the NDC leadership are serving as mediators in the reconciliation process, stressing that the party remains

committed to internal democracy and will not impose candidates in Kano State or any other part of the country.

"The NDC leadership will not impose candidates in Kano State and indeed across the nation, as the party cherishes the virtues of internal democracy," he said.

The party described the meeting, which lasted several hours, as productive and expressed optimism that ongoing engagements would strengthen cohesion within its ranks.

Meanwhile, the party also dismissed reports claiming that official results of its primary elections had been released, insisting that no such results had been announced in any state.

The party, therefore, urged members and the general public to disregard any purported list of primary election results currently circulating, warning that such information did not emanate from its leadership.

Director reaffirmed the party's commitment to a transparent and democratic process as it continues consultations ahead of its forthcoming political activities.

**MINISTERIAL PRESS BRIEFING:**

Edo State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua (middle), during a Ministerial Press Briefing in Benin city. On the left is the Commissioner for Public Safety and Security, Hon. Festus Ibie, and Commissioner for Transportation, Hon. Saturday Uwulekhue.

**Warri-Itakpe train crash: NRC admits misidentification****ABUJA**

The Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has clarified that Senator Ede Dafinone and former Delta State Secretary to the State Government, Patrick Ukah, were not among the passengers on board the Warri-Itakpe Train Service that derailed near Agbor in Delta State on Monday.

The clarification follows an earlier report attributed to the Federal Ministry of Transportation, which mistakenly included the Delta Central senator and the former Secretary to the State Government among the 482 occupants of the train involved in the accident.

In a statement issued on Tuesday and signed by its Managing Director, Dr. Kayode Opeifa, the

NRC acknowledged the error and moved to correct the record.

According to the corporation, both Dafinone and Ukah were not passengers on the ill-fated train but arrived at the scene after the derailment occurred.

"The Nigerian Railway Corporation wishes to clarify that contrary to an earlier statement, Senator Ede Dafinone, representing Delta Central Senatorial District, and former Secretary to the Delta State Government, Hon. Patrick Ukah, were not passengers on board the Warri-Itakpe Train Service involved in the accident near Agbor," the statement read.

The NRC explained that the two prominent Delta figures were instead part of stakeholders who arrived promptly at the scene to assist in rescue and

emergency coordination efforts.

It noted that their presence contributed significantly to the mobilisation of first responders and other emergency personnel who participated in rescue operations following the derailment.

"Both distinguished individuals greatly assisted in the mobilisation of first responders and other emergency personnel who participated in the rescue operations following the incident," the corporation added.

The agency also expressed regret over the misinformation and apologised for any embarrassment or inconvenience caused to the individuals named in the earlier report.

Meanwhile, discrepancies have emerged over casualty figures from the incident. While the Ministry of Transportation

reported four deaths, the NRC had earlier put the figure at three.

The ministry stated that the train carried 442 ticketed passengers along with 40 crew members, security personnel, and service providers, bringing the total to 482 occupants.

It further disclosed that 24 passengers sustained serious injuries, while several others suffered minor injuries and are currently receiving medical attention in hospitals around Agbor.

Both the NRC and the Ministry of Transportation have confirmed that investigations have commenced to determine the cause of the derailment, which occurred just weeks after services on the route were temporarily suspended due to a technical fault that previously stranded passengers and raised safety concerns.

**Agbor train mishap: Dafinone mourns victims, demands reforms****ASABA**

Ede Dafinone, the Senator representing Delta Central Senatorial District, has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic accident involving the Warri-Itakpe Train Service near Agbor, Delta State, on Monday, June 8, 2026, and called for urgent measures to strengthen railway safety across Nigeria.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Senator Dafinone extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of those who

lost their lives in the incident and sympathised with passengers who sustained injuries.

According to the distinguished senator, while the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) confirmed that three passengers died and all others were accounted for, the loss of any life remains a painful tragedy.

"I received with deep sorrow the news of the tragic accident involving the Warri-Itakpe Train Service near Agbor. Every life lost is one too many, and the pain of the affected families is

immeasurable," he said.

The senator noted that his thoughts were with the bereaved families, injured passengers receiving treatment, and survivors who may continue to deal with the emotional trauma caused by the incident.

He commended the swift response of the Delta State Government, emergency responders, healthcare personnel, security agencies, railway officials, and volunteers whose efforts helped save lives and provide critical assistance to passengers.

Describing the accident as a stark reminder of the need to prioritise transportation safety, Dafinone stressed the importance of maintaining public confidence in the nation's railway system.

"The Warri-Itakpe rail corridor is a vital national asset, serving thousands of passengers and supporting economic activities across several states. Its continued success depends on both operational efficiency and public confidence in its safety," he stated.

# EDSG engages 500 Forest Guards, undergoes training to strengthen security

RICHARD EWEKA

**BENIN CITY**

The Edo State government has engaged 500 youths who are undergoing intensive security training at the Police Training College in Ogi-da Barracks, Egor local government area of Edo State.

The engagement and training has become necessary following the increased rate of kidnapping and banditry activities across the Country as the recruited 500 forest guards are to secure forests and farmlands against

banditry and kidnapping.

Briefing journalists in Benin City on the efforts of the governor Monday Okpebholo led administration on securing the State, the commissioner for security and public safety, Festus Ebea commended the various security agencies in the State for the role played to keep the State safe.

He noted that following the directive of the Federal government for States to engage 1,000 forest guards, Edo State has employed 500 who have commenced training since Friday

5th of June 2026 at the Police Training College Ogida.

He added that the State will soon recruit an additional 500 to hit a 1,000-man target to secure forests bordering Kogi, Ondo, Delta and other neighboring states, as well as mineral-rich areas in Akoko-Edo and Etsako local government areas.

"Since Friday, following the directive of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu through the office of National Security Adviser, we have engaged 500 able and intelligent Edo youths who are undergoing training at Police College.

"These youths when they are finished the training will be deployed to man our bushes and forest especially forest shared neighboring States where criminal activities are prevalent to make it safe. These actions will make the forest unsafe for bandits and kidnappers".

Ebea added that the governor Monday Okpebholo led administration is working hard to ensure Edo is safe to live and do businesses as the government focused more on security collaborating with various security agencies in the State.

He disclosed that investigation has shown that insiders are collaborating with criminal elements in the State as some

youths and their collaborators are in the police net helping them with the relevant information that will help track other criminal elements in the State.

"When I assumed office, the governor gave me a matching order to employ 300 security Corp members for each local government area in Edo State. In all 540 Edo State security corp members who will col-

laborate with sister security agencies to fight crime and criminality in the State. We are working towards ensuring a safer state for Edo people.

"No local government area in Edo State has less than 300 security Corp members. Logistics has been provided by the Okpebholo led administration to ensure these men discharge their duties effectively".

## FG seeks stronger stakeholder participation in agro-processing zones

**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has called on farmers, agribusinesses, financial institutions, research organisations, development partners and others to actively support the implementation of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Programme.

It said stronger stakeholder collaboration was critical to strengthening agricultural value chains, promoting agro-industrial development, enhancing food security and creating jobs.

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Marcus Ogunbiyi, made the call on Wednesday in Abuja at the SAPZ Phase One Mid-Term Review Workshop.

Ogunbiyi described SAPZ as a strategic agribusiness model designed to support Nigeria's economic diversification agenda through agriculture.

According to him, the programme seeks to transform

agriculture into a modern, competitive and wealth-creating sector capable of driving economic growth, creating jobs, improving food security and boosting export earnings.

He said the initiative was expected to reduce post-harvest losses from 45 per cent to 20 per cent while significantly increasing the productivity of key staple crops.

The permanent secretary added that the programme could contribute substantial volumes of food to the nation's food basket, create about 500,000 direct and indirect jobs across participating locations and generate up to 2.5 million temporary jobs through infrastructure development and related services.

He described SAPZ as one of the Federal Government's most strategic interventions for agricultural transformation, aligned with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda on food security, industrialisation, economic diversification, job creation and rural development.

**KIDS DIALOGUE SERIES:**

L-R: Secretary, Association of Polio Survivors of Nigeria, Abubakar Shehu; National President, Deaf Women Association of Nigeria, Hellen Beyoku-Alade; Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa; former Deputy Director of Programmes, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Plilomena Nnweze; and Executive Director, National Primary Health Care Development Agency, Dr Muyi Aina, during kids dialogue series with Education Minister at the Government Science School Maitama in Abuja on Wednesday.

## Police debunk reports of attacks on schools in Niger

**MINNA**

The Niger Police Command has debunked reports alleging that hoodlums attacked schools in Bosso, Kpakungu, Sabon-Wuse and Lambata areas of the state.

The command described the reports, which have been circulating in public spaces, as false and misleading.

This is contained in a statement issued on Wednesday in Minna by the Police Public Rela-

tions Officer, SP Wasiu Abiodun.

Abiodun said the command had verified the claims by visiting all the schools mentioned in the reports and found no evidence of any attack.

"The command hereby states categorically that having visited all the schools mentioned in the said areas, there was no such attack in any of the schools within the state," he said.

He urged members of the public to disregard the information, which he said was suspect-

ed to have been circulated by mischief makers to create panic and fear among residents and within school communities.

According to him, intelligence investigations have commenced to trace the source of the false reports and identify those responsible for spreading them.

Abiodun said the Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr Adamu Elleman, had earlier directed Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) to work closely with school administrators in

line with the school protection initiative.

He explained that the directive was aimed at enhancing police visibility around schools and ensuring the safety of students, staff and surrounding communities.

The police spokesman also urged residents to report any suspicious activities or security concerns through the command's emergency lines: 0703 196 4389, 0803 223 3454 and 0916 880 2621.

## Osun shootings: Police begin investigation, beef security

**OSOGBO**

The Police Command in Osun has commenced investigations into the shooting incidents that occurred on Tuesday in parts of the state.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Wednesday by the command's spokesperson, DSP Abiodun Ojelabi.

Ojelabi said the command expressed deep concern over the incidents, which left some passers-by injured in the affected areas.

He noted that following reports of the shootings, the Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Gotan, directed the Command's Violent Crime Response Unit, Department of Operations, and Intelligence Units to launch a thorough investigation aimed at arresting and prosecuting those responsible.

The spokesperson further assured residents that necessary measures had been taken, adding that normalcy had been restored in the affected areas.

"Measures have also been put in place to prevent a recurrence, while security has been reinforced in the affected locations.

"An intensive, intelligence-led operation is ongoing to apprehend the perpetrators and their sponsors, regardless of their societal or political status," he said.

Ojelabi added that those injured in the incidents had been evacuated by the police to medical facilities for treatment.

He urged residents to remain calm, vigilant, and law-abiding, and called on anyone with

useful information to report to the nearest police station or the command's headquarters.

He assured that all information provided would be treated with strict confidentiality.

"Individuals and groups are warned against taking the law into their hands or engaging in acts capable of threatening the peace and security of the state," he said.

There were sporadic shootings in Ife and Owo-Ede areas of the state on Tuesday, during which some passers-by were injured by stray bullets.

## Nigeria's democracy evolving amid several challenges —NBA Chairman-elect

**MAKURDI**

The Chairman Elect, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Makurdi Branch, Mr Joseph Gbagyo, has said that Nigeria's democracy is evolving in spite of the country's many challenges.

Gbagyo stated this in an interview with newsmen on Wednesday in Makurdi.

He said that 27 years since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999, significant progress has been made, particularly in the area of peaceful transitions of power from one government to another without military intervention or coup d'états.

The legal practitioner emphasised that the 27-year uninterrupted democracy experience was a notable achievement and an indication that, politically, Nigeria was maturing.

"However, whether we are truly adhering to the democratic principles practised by countries we often model ourselves after, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, is a different matter entirely.

"The essence of democracy is government of the people, by

the people and for the people. Whether citizens are genuinely enjoying the dividends of democracy remains a subject for serious discussion.

"Those elected into office enter into a social contract with the people, and they are expected to uphold the fundamental objectives and principles of state policy.

"The contract includes the provision of quality healthcare, education, a conducive environment, cultural integration, and overall welfare.

"Given the current security challenges, political tensions, internal wrangling, galloping inflation, and huge infrastructure deficits across the country, questions remain as to whether these obligations are being adequately fulfilled," he said.

Gbagyo expressed hope that if Nigerians worked together, they could build a better country.

He, however, stressed that those entrusted with leadership responsibilities must embrace the true tenets of democracy and ethical governance, including fairness, equity, respect for the rule of law and adherence to the principle of separation of powers.

## NEWS

# Senate urges urgent textile sector revival

ABUJA

The Senate has called for immediate federal intervention to revive Nigeria's once-thriving textile industry, warning that the sector's collapse has contributed to rising unemployment, economic decline, and growing insecurity across the country.

The upper chamber made the call during plenary on Tuesday following a motion sponsored by Senators Abdurrahman Kawu Suleiman, Simon Bako Lalong, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, Babangida Uba Hussaini and Muntari Mohammed Dandutse.

Lawmakers traced the rise and decline of the textile sector, noting that Nigeria's first large-scale textile mill was established in Kaduna in 1957, paving the way for industrial expansion across the country.

According to the Senate, deliberate government policies, including restrictions on textile imports during the 1960s and 1970s, enabled the industry to flourish, attracting investments and creating hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The lawmakers recalled that at its peak in the late 1970s and

1980s, Nigeria had about 167 textile mills employing nearly 500,000 workers directly, making the sector the second-largest employer of labour after the Federal Government.

The Senate noted that Kaduna earned the title of "Textile City" due to its concentration of major textile firms and its role as headquarters of the Nigerian Textile Manufacturers Association.

The state once hosted about 11 textile companies operating at full capacity, including Arewa Textiles Plc, Fantext Nigeria Limited, Nortex Nigeria Limited, Super Text Limited and United Nigeria Textiles Limited.

However, senators lamented that by the late 1990s, many of the companies had begun to struggle under the weight of obsolete machinery, inadequate capital, and persistent power supply challenges.

They further observed that by 2007, major firms such as Kaduna Textile Limited, Arewa Textiles and United Nigeria Textiles Limited had shut down operations completely, resulting in the loss of more than 7,000 jobs and crippling economic activities in the region.

The Senate expressed con-

cern that despite being ranked among Africa's largest textile producers in the 1980s, Nigeria has now become heavily dependent on imported textile products.

Lawmakers noted that the country currently relies on imports for more than 99 per cent of its textile needs, with products largely sourced from countries including China, In-

donesia and Taiwan.

They warned that the influx of foreign textiles, particularly after the lifting of import restrictions in 2010, has continued to undermine local manufacturers, weaken industrial growth, and drain foreign exchange reserves.

The lawmakers also recalled that the industry once generated an estimated \$2 billion

annually and possessed the capacity to produce more than 14 billion textile products ranging from African prints and wax fabrics to embroidery lace, furnishing materials, fishing nets and household linen.

Concerned by the continued decline, the Senate resolved to urge the Federal Government, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal Min-

istry of Trade and Investment to implement urgent measures aimed at reviving textile industries in Kaduna, Kano and other parts of the country.

According to the lawmakers, restoring the sector would not only create jobs and stimulate industrial growth but also help reduce youth unemployment, curb social unrest and strengthen Nigeria's economic resilience.



## UNVEILING OF 2,000 UNITS HOUSING PROJECT:

L-R: Vicar Anglican Diocese of Enugu, Rev. Chucks Ogbogu-Igboanago; President, Enugu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, Mr Nnanyelugo Onyemelukwe; Archbishop of Anglican Province of Enugu, Archbishop Sosthenes Eze; GMD, Copen Group, Dr Ugochukwu Chime; Founder, Adoration Ministries Enugu, Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka, and Project Lead, Copen Group, Mr Obiora Chime, during the Unveiling of 2,000 Units Housing Project by Copen Group in Enugu on Wednesday.

## NIS leverages technology in fight against irregular migration

ABUJA

The Nigeria Immigration Service says it has strengthened border security through advanced technology deployment and enhanced surveillance to curb irregular migration and migrant smuggling across the country's borders.

The Service Public Relations Officer, Mr Akinsola Akinlabi, disclosed this in an interview with our correspondent on Wednesday in Abuja.

Akinlabi said the NIS had recorded significant successes in detecting and preventing illegal movement of persons through the nation's land borders.

He attributed the achievements to sustained border patrol operations and surveillance mechanisms.

According to him, border officers have consistently intercepted irregular migrants attempting to leave or enter the country through unauthorised routes.

"Most of the time, when people embark on irregular migration journeys, our officers stationed along the borders are able to intercept them and, in many cases, reunite them with their families.

"A lot has been recorded in this area, and these efforts have significantly reduced the number of people using land routes to leave the country irregularly."

The NIS spokesman also explained that the service's Border Surveillance Architecture was designed to monitor difficult

and remote terrains that may be inaccessible to personnel.

He said the surveillance infrastructure had enabled the service to identify routes frequently used for irregular migration and strategically deploy assets to such locations.

He noted that the service's mandate in the area focused on border security and the prevention of migrant smuggling, adding that surveillance activities covered both inbound and outbound movements.

He added that irregular migrants attempting to enter Nigeria through illegal routes were often intercepted by border officers and returned to their countries of origin or the locations from which they came.

Speaking on challenges confronting border management efforts, Akinlabi said irregular migration remained a complex societal issue requiring collective action beyond enforcement measures.

According to him, while no border management agency in the world operates without challenges, the federal government has continued to support the NIS through the provision of critical operational tools and resources.

He, however, said one of the major obstacles was the failure of many people to fully appreciate the risks and consequences associated with irregular migration.

"We see irregular migration as a societal problem because many people do not understand the dangers associated with it."

## North-West Governors unveil poverty reduction plans

KANO

The North-West Governors' Forum (NWGF) has convened a high-level policy dialogue in Kano towards reducing multidimensional poverty through scaled social protection systems and innovative financing.

The summit, which drew policymakers, development partners, and technical experts from across the seven North-West states, focused on devising practical and sustainable strategies to tackle the drivers of multidimensional poverty.

Our correspondent reported that the conclave paid particular attention to children, women, and other vulnerable groups in the North-West.

Declaring the dialogue held in Kano opened, Governor Abba Yusuf said social protection should be treated not merely as a welfare measure, but as a strategic investment in human capital, social stability, and economic growth.

Represented by his deputy, Murtala Sule-Garo, Yusuf highlighted Kano State's steps to institutionalise social protection, including the 2025 Social Protection Policy Law and the establishment of the Social Protection Directorate under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation.

He said: "The state continues to invest in education, healthcare, skills acquisition, youth empowerment, and other social intervention programmes aimed at improving living standards.

"Addressing the scale of poverty and vulnerability across the region requires a shift from fragmented interventions to comprehensive, integrated, and data-driven social protection systems that are transparent, accountable, and reach those most in need."

In her welcome address, NWGF Director-General, Maryam Yahaya described the dialogue as a defining moment for the region.

She added that in spite of

its population, human capital, and economic potential, the North-West still faces high multidimensional poverty, poor health outcomes, insecurity, and a growing number of out-of-school children.

According to her, these challenges cross state boundaries and demand coordinated regional responses, urging that social protection should be seen as an investment in stability, productivity, and the future of the region.

Yahaya noted that the NWGF had adopted the North-West Peace, Security and Development Framework to tackle fragility and accelerate human development by linking peace, security, economic growth, and social wellbeing.

Delivering a goodwill message, UNICEF Deputy Representative, Dr Rowan Khan highlighted severe challenges facing children in the North-West, including high maternal mortality, malnutrition, stunting, and limited access to essential services.

She observed that child-

protected social protection programmes, such as unconditional cash transfers, were vital for improving access to healthcare, education, and nutrition.

One participant, Muhammad Haruna, told our correspondent that he was optimistic about the potential of strengthened regional cooperation.

He said that with innovative financing mechanisms and the expansion of social protection systems, the North-West could witness a substantial reduction in poverty levels.

Another participant, Halima Yusuf, emphasised the critical role of inclusive policies and community-driven initiatives in ensuring that social protection programmes reach the most vulnerable.

She called for continuous engagement between government agencies, development partners, and civil society organisations to design sustainable strategies that address both immediate needs and long-term development.

## Farm manager docked for allegedly stealing N7.6m from employer

IBADAN

A 35-year-old farm manager, Fasasi Ridwan, was on Wednesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan, for allegedly stealing N7,620,000.

The defendant, who resides at Salaam-Salaam area, Alakia

in Ibadan, was arraigned on a one-count charge of stealing, to which he pleaded not guilty.

The Prosecutor, ASP Foluke Adedosu alleged that the defendant, between 2025 and May 26, stole N7,620,000, being proceeds from the sales of cows and rams and fraudulently converted the money to

his own use.

Adedosu said the livestock belonged to Prime Demland Farm Limited, Ogunsina Village, Oyedeji Road in Ibadan.

She said the offence contravened the provisions of section 383 and punishable under section 390 (6) (9) of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State 2000.

Defence Counsel, Mr. Y. F. Abdulateef asked for bail for his client on liberal terms.

The Magistrate, Mrs A.T. Oyediji admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N1 million with two sureties in like sum.

Oyediji adjourned the matter until July 14, for hearing.

# Bill to increase Appeal Court justices, passes 2nd reading in Senate

**ABUJA**

The Senate passed for second reading, a bill for an act to amend the Court of Appeal Act, to among other

things, increase the number of Justices of the court from 70 to 110.

This followed the presentation of the general principles of the bill at plenary on Tues-

day by the Senate Leader Sen. Bamidele Opeyemi (APC-Ekiti).

Bamidele, leading the debate, said the bill sought to amend the Court of Appeal

Act, Cap. C36, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, to strengthen the administration of justice in Nigeria through expansion of the court.

He said the bill seeks to

modernise operations and enhancement of access to justice and provide for integration of virtual court proceedings.

He said that the appeal court occupies a strategic position within the Nigerian judiciary.

"Over the years, the court of appeal has experienced a significant increase in its workload arising from population growth, expansion of economic activities, increasing electoral disputes, constitutional litigation, commercial transactions and the growing demand for judicial remedies."

He, however, said unfortunately, the institutional capacity of the court had not expanded at the same pace as the volume and complexity of cases.

Bamidele said there was an urgent need for legislative intervention to reposition the courts for greater efficiency, accessibility and responsiveness to contemporary realities.

He said the passage of the bill would have far-reaching benefits for the administration of justice in Nigeria.

Bamidele said its passage would give rise to an efficient appellate court system, that is sacrosanct in the quest for national development, enduring democratic governance and

the rule of law.

He said the bill represents a timely and necessary reform of the court of appeal.

"It addresses long standing structural and operational challenges while preparing the court to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving society."

The Ekiti-lawmaker said the proposed amendments were carefully designed to strengthen judicial capacity, modernise court operations, expand access to justice and improve the overall efficiency of appellate adjudication in Nigeria.

"In view of the foregoing, I therefore urge this distinguished senate to give the court of appeal amendment bill, 2026, a favourable consideration and support its second reading," Bamidele said.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio, after the bill passed second reading, referred it to the Committee on Judiciary Human Rights and Legal Matters for further legislative input.

The committee is to return to plenary as soon as practicable.

Akpabio said the bill, when passed would help decongest the court of appeal and speed up dispensation of justice, adding that justice delayed is justice denied.



## INSPECTION OF CREEKS PROJECTS:

Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri (2nd left), and other government officials, during the inspection of Creeks Projects at Nembe/Brass LGA of Bayelsa on Wednesday.

## Court adjourns property dispute suit against Iyabo Obasanjo, others to July 9

**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday adjourned a suit filed against Sen. Iyabo Obasanjo and others over an Abuja property until July 9 for hearing.

The suit, which was before Justice Mohammed Umar as at March 30, had now been reassigned back to Justice Inyang Ekwo, who was earlier handling the case.

The matter however, could not proceed and was fixed for July 9 for further mention.

On March 30 when the case came up before Justice Umar, neither the plaintiffs' lawyer nor the defendants' counsel was in court and the case was fixed for June 10.

Justice Umar had, on Janu-

ary 6, fixed March 30 for the matter following the absence of the lawyers in court.

When the case came up on October 2, 2025, hearing could not equally proceed.

Counsel for the plaintiffs, Abniyilo Na'allah, had sought an adjournment following inability to serve the defendants in the suit as no lawyer appeared for the defence.

The plaintiffs; ABB Electrical Systems Limited and Amb. Yohana Margif, had dragged Sen. Obasanjo and other co-defendants to court over dispute on a landed property.

The property is located at Plot 4254, Cadastral Zone A04, measuring approximately 1.67Ha in Asokoro District, FCT, Abuja.

Other defendants in the suit

are the former Senator representing the FCT, Philip Aduda; Ismail Iron; John Mbata; Jamaila Sani Alhassan; Altine Jibrin, and unknown persons as 2nd to 7th defendants respectfully.

Justice Ekwo had, on January 28, 2025, refused to grant the ex-parte motion filed by the plaintiffs after it was moved by Na'allah.

The applicants had sought an order of interim injunction restraining the defendants/respondents from entering, trespassing, altering or modifying the property known as Plot 4254, Cadastral Zone A04.

The plot is approximately 1.67Ha, Asokoro, Asokoro District Abuja.

The judge, instead, directed the plaintiffs to put the defendants on notice in order to hear from them why the prayer should not be granted.

The plaintiffs had filed the

motion marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/67/2025 dated Jan. 13, 2025, but filed Jan. 17, 2025 by Na'allah.

In their six-ground argument, the applicants said they were agitated with the fear of the defendants trespassing or altering the property belonging to them.

They said they were the rightful owners of the land by virtue of the statutory Right of Occupancy granted to them.

The plaintiffs/applicants said they have been in quiet and peaceful possession of the land without any challenge from the defendants/respondents or anyone at all.

They said it will occasion serious miscarriage of justice against the plaintiffs/applicants if the defendants/respondents are allowed to tamper with, enter, trespass, alter or modify the property belonging to the plaintiffs.

## 2 students bag 8 months each for conspiracy, possession of weapon

**JOS**

Jos Magistrate's Court on Wednesday sentenced two students, Kalifah Salisu and Auwal Nuru, both 19 years old, to eight months each in correctional centre for conspiracy and possession of daggers.

The convicts pleaded guilty to the charge of conspiracy and possession of weapons brought against them by the police.

The Magistrate, Mrs Han-natu Ashom sentenced the convicts to three months each in prison for conspiracy with

a fine option of N100,000 each and another N30,000 fine or five months in prison for possession of weapons.

While reviewing the facts, the Prosecutor, Insp. Ibrahim Gokwat, told the court that the case was reported on May 4, at the Nassarawa Gwong Police Station by one Kabiru Sani, a member of a vigilante group.

Gokwat said the convicts were arrested during routine patrols as they were found with daggers.

He said the offences contravened the Plateau Penal Code Law.

## Man drags ex-fiancée, her mother to court over breach of agreement

**MARARABA (NASARAWA)**

Mr Ibrahim Tanko has dragged his former fiancée, Abigail Hammam and her mother before the Upper Area Court in Marraba Gurku, Nasarawa State over alleged breach of agreement to formalise marriage.

Ibrahim, filed the case against Hammam and her mother Hannatu, who live in New Nyanya, Karu, FCT.

According to the particulars of claim, the plaintiff averred that he met Hammam, in 2012 and sought her hand in marriage.

He said he approached Hannatu for her permission to perform all marriage rites, which she granted on the condition that her daughter will not convert from Christianity to Islam and that family approval will be obtained.

The plaintiff further averred that while awaiting family approval, he and Hammam, got intimate, which led to the birth of their daughter.

He said he took full custody and care of the child, and that she later moved in with him.

"She moved in with me with her mother's permission while we awaited the final family ap-

proval for the marriage.

"After much delay, I discovered that the defendants were playing games with me because they had reached a decision not to allow the marriage.

"My former fiancée became hostile and later left me and took our daughter away for over three months, before returning to push for custody," he said.

The plaintiff averred that due to his former fiancée's confrontation and violence, he reported the matter to the Mpape Police Station, where it was resolved that he should retain custody of their daughter, while the mother

would have access.

He alleged that the agreement remained unaltered until the defendants allegedly took the child away for over five months without his consent.

He said he later discovered that after taking the child, his former fiancée got married to another man, with whom she is presently living, and dumped their daughter with her mother without his consent.

Tanko added that he has been solely responsible for the upbringing, education, and welfare of their daughter since birth.

## Woman, 23, in court for allegedly stealing child

**ADO-EKITI**

A 23-year-old woman, Aisat Usman, was on Wednesday arraigned before an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrate's Court for allegedly stealing a one-year-old child.

The defendant, of no fixed address, is facing a charge of stealing.

The prosecutor, Insp Olubu Apata, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on May 29 in the Odo-Ado area of Ado-Ekiti.

Apata alleged that the defendant stole the one-year-old child from his mother's shop.

He said that the defendant was, however, apprehended by neighbours who raised the

alarm and pursued her, leading to the rescue of the child.

According to him, the offence contravenes Section 292(1) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The prosecutor urged the court to adjourn the case to enable him study the case file and assemble his witnesses.

The defendant, who had no legal representation, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Taiwo Ajibade, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N100,000 with two sureties in like sum.

Ajibade subsequently adjourned the case until July 10 for hearing.

## NEWS

## Foreign

# Trump and Iran trade new threats after strikes exchanged

US President Donald Trump and Iran's senior officials have traded new threats of further action, after the two sides exchanged strikes.

Trump said Tehran had taken "too long to negotiate a deal" and would now "have to pay the price", without giving specific details. He said Iran had been "completely defeated" and was "all talk and no action".

It came after Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi earlier warned his country would "leave no attack or threat unanswered",

saying that the US had suffered "defeats on the battlefield".

The US said it struck Iranian sites on Wednesday after a US army helicopter was downed in the Gulf. In response, Iran launched strikes at US bases in the region.

Iranian defence systems, ground control stations and radar sites were targeted near the Strait of Hormuz, the US military Central Command (Centcom) said.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it launched strikes on 21 targets at US bases in the region, one

in Bahrain and the other in Jordan, while Kuwait's army said it was also intercepting an attack.

Writing on Truth Social on Wednesday, Trump said: "Iran's Military is a complete and total mess. Much of it, like their Navy and Air Force, doesn't even exist anymore - They have been completely defeated."

He added: "They've taken too long to negotiate a deal that would have been great for them, now they will have to pay the price!!!"

Trump's comments were in contrast to Tuesday, when he

told journalists the US and Iran were "in the final throes of what will be a very, very good deal".

Also on Wednesday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqai accused the US of "damaging this diplomatic process through the contradictory messages it sends, its repeated shifts in positions and demands, and, worst of all, through repeated violations of the ceasefire".

He said Iran needed to reassess the situation, adding that any diplomatic process required a minimum of stability.



**MILITARY FORCES MEN:**

A rebel soldier in the Myanmar's civil war.

## Inside Myanmar, rebels are losing ground as military forces men into army

The four young men in the rebel camp hidden deep in jungle-covered mountains never wanted a part in Myanmar's civil war.

They didn't choose to be soldiers for the military either.

One had been a chef on his way home from work when he was grabbed off the street. His lack of ID was enough for the military to detain him and force him to sign up. Another was taken on his way back from a late-night karaoke session; a third had been working for the forestry department when he was arrested. The fourth man says on being arrested, drugs were slipped into his shoe, and he was framed and made to enlist.

"Before we even understood what was happening, we were sent straight to the front lines," one of the men - all between the ages of 19 and 25 - tells the BBC.

"They made us do all kinds of things we didn't want to do," another adds. "We never got any real rest, not in the morning, not during the day, and not even at night."

"The conscripts had to do everything. While the regular soldiers hardly had to work."

The BBC agreed to hide the men's identities to avoid their families facing retribution.

They'll stay with the PDF for now, but will be taken to the border with Thailand eventually, "because if we return now", one says, "the military could still track us". The BBC agreed to hide their identities to avoid their families facing retribution.

They are happier here, they say, being treated "like brothers, not strangers".

They'll stay with the PDF for now, but will be taken to the border with Thailand eventually, "because if we return now", one says, "the military could still track us". The BBC agreed to hide their identities to avoid their families facing retribution.

The reality is that, despite the reluctance of these four unwilling recruits, the military's forced conscription policy has shifted the junta's fortunes in the civil war.

In many parts of the country, the rebels are now on the back foot against the military, who seized power in 2021 from the democratically elected government, jailing its leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Civil war has torn the country apart. Thousands have been killed and millions displaced.

More than two years ago, an alliance of ethnic and rebel groups made sweeping gains throughout the country, notching up a string of victories against the junta. Once on the offensive, in most places across Myanmar the resistance is now on the defensive.

The military still only fully controls less than half the country, but it has been making gains - including key townships and retaking a critical road from Mandalay to Myitkyina in the north. Thousands of soldiers are advancing in an attempt to re-establish control of several border areas including Kachin, Chin and Karen states.

The BBC travelled to Myanmar without the permission of the authorities - the only way to

report from rebel-held territory. During the 10 days we were there, we spent time with rebel fighters, and travelled to hospitals and front line positions in Bago and Karen states to report on how the war is unfolding.

And it is men like the four deserters - those required to enlist and serve a minimum of two years after the military began enforcing a conscription law in 2024 - who have made the most difference, says Ko Kaung, a PDF battalion commander.

"Military forced conscription became the main challenging factor for us on the battlefield as it enabled the military with limitless manpower," he explains as he takes his men on patrol in the sweltering heat.

"For us, despite having technology and intellectual advantages, our resources are very constrained. With limited funds, we cannot source required components as much as we want and cannot recruit new soldiers as easily as the military."

## Banned referee Artan arrives home in Somalia

Referee Omar Artan has vowed to officiate at the 2030 World Cup after arriving home in Somalia following his ban from entering the United States.

The 34-year-old - Africa's referee of the year in 2025 - was set to be the first Somali to referee at a World Cup finals but was denied entry at Miami International Airport on Monday despite holding a diplomatic passport and a single entry US visa.

No reason for his repatriation has been given by US immigration authorities, but Somalia is one of several countries on a travel ban list introduced by President Donald Trump.

He arrived back in Somalia on Wednesday, landing at Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu where he was greeted by government officials and representatives of the Somali Football Federation, as well as fellow referees and local residents.

Artan is expected to attend a public event at Mogadishu Stadium later on Wednesday afternoon and watch a match between Heegan and Dekadaha.

"I'd like to thank the officials, ministers, MPs and everyone. I want to thank my country and people for their support. The encouragement I received here, I know I'll get more support outside [the airport]," Artan said, translated into English by the BBC.

"Everything is pre-destined. Fifa supported me well and were in touch with me until I reached Mogadishu.

"I promise you that I'll be of-

ficiating you in the next World Cup. Somalia, everywhere, I'm letting you know."

Artan, who was named the Confederation of African Football (Caf) men's referee of the year in 2025, was one of 52 referees selected for the tournament.

However, his "dream" came crashing down as he attempted to travel to the on-pitch officials' base in Florida, with Artan telling the New York Times, external he had faced an 11-hour immigration interview and was detained for several hours before he was put on a flight back to Istanbul, Turkey.

Speaking to BBC World Service, Andrew Giuliani, who leads the White House Task Force on the World Cup, said: "While I can't go into the derog [derogatory information] on that I can tell you it was the right decision by customs and border patrol and I support that decision."

It was not possible for Artan to stay outside the United States and referee matches played in Canada or Mexico, with all on-pitch officials based in Florida for training, preparation, and security.

Trump placed a full entry ban under any visa category for 12 countries, including Somalia, in June 2025.

Two days before the World Cup draw in December 2025, Trump drew widespread attention for comments made about Somalia in the lead up to a planned immigration enforcement operation in Minnesota, which has a large Somali

## Ukraine says missiles hit military plant deep inside Russia

Ukrainian forces have carried out a missile attack deep inside Russia, hitting a major military plant overnight, President Volodymyr Zelensky has said.

He said FP-5 Flamingo cruise missiles struck the drone and missile plant in the city of Cheboksary, in the Chuvash Republic, more than 900km (560 miles) from the front line. Local officials say said three people were injured in a missile attack on the city.

Ukraine also said it had hit the Moscow-occupied port of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, a Russian oil refinery in Samara and a "shadow fleet" oil tanker in the Black Sea.

In recent months, Ukraine's military has intensified its drone strikes on key facilities across Russia.

Kyiv says energy sites are legitimate targets, as they allow Moscow to continue its war effort. However, missile attacks deep inside Russia have been rare.

Russia's military said that its air defence units had intercepted or shot down 326 Ukrainian drones over a number of regions overnight.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's air

force said it downed 181 out of 207 drones fired by Russia during that time. It also admitted 21 direct hits in 14 locations.

At least two people were killed and 26 injured, including two children, in four Ukrainian regions in the past 24 hours, local officials said.

In a post on Telegram on Wednesday, President Zelensky wrote: "Overnight, Ukrainian FP-5 Flamingos hit a military plant in Cheboksary that supplies the occupier's army with components for drones and missiles".

He also published footage said to be showing a missile flying toward its target and plumes of smoke from a facility.

Ukraine's military later said the VNIIR-Progress plant had been struck and there had been a fire at the site.

Chuvash Republic head Oleg Nikolaev confirmed that Cheboksary had been hit, reporting three injuries. He did not say whether the military plant was damaged.

The FP-5 Flamingo missile has a 1,150kg (2,535lbs) warhead and a reported range of 3,000km, putting Russia's capital Moscow and other major cities well within its range.

## First charges laid over deadly Hong Kong fire

Hong Kong authorities have laid their first charges over the devastating fire at the Wang Fuk housing complex last November.

Two companies and seven people were handed a total of 25 charges, including manslaughter, conspiracy to defraud, attempting to pervert the course of public justice, and tax evasion.

The blaze, which killed 168 people, was the deadliest fire the city had seen in more than 70 years.

Authorities said they had charged the project consultancy firm and the main contractor tasked with delivering renovations, as well as individuals from both companies.

Structural engineering consultancy firm Will Power Architects and contractor Prestige Construction and Engineering have both been charged with manslaughter.

A director of Prestige, 52-year-old Ho Kin-yip, was also charged with manslaughter, along with a director of Will Power, 40-year-old Wong Hap-yin, and the firm's registered inspector, 44-year-old Ng Yeuk.

Having been first arrested soon after the fire, all three were denied bail on Wednesday.

An independent committee investigating the fire has identified several critical breaches that led to the massive blaze, which also left thousands of people homeless.

Among other things, fire alarms in seven of the eight residential blocks were deactivated while windows were boarded up with flammable foam boards.

"On the day of the fire, nearly all fire safety systems meant

to protect lives failed because of human factors," the committee's lead lawyer Victor Dawes told a public inquiry earlier this year.

Some residents had also said that constructions workers had been littering cigarette butts throughout the site while they were still lit.

The three men also face corruption charges laid by Hong Kong's anti-graft watchdog alongside four others - including Wong's wife and his friend.

They alleged there was fraud in the tendering process for the renovation, fraud in the project supervision, money laundering by three individuals, and attempts to deceive investigators probing the blaze by hiding a massive bag of cash and pressuring a witness to lie.

The case is adjourned to 2 September to allow further investigations.

Police said they had arrested 35 people on allegations of manslaughter and fraud.

The corruption watchdog had also separately arrested 23 people, including consultants, contractors and members of the owners' corporation of the complex.

It is unclear how many others have since been charged or been released.

In an effort to contain public anger following the fire, authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing had warned the media not to spread "false information" or "smear" government efforts in dealing with the tragedy.

Just over a week after it broke out, Hong Kong's national security police arrested local columnist Wong Kwok-ngon, accusing him of publishing "seditious" content on the official response to the fire to "provoke hatred" toward the government.



**SOUTH AFRICA MASS SHOOTING:**

No arrests have been made but the police say they are following all possible leads.

## Manhunt under way in South Africa after 12 killed in mass shooting in Johannesburg

Police in South Africa have launched a manhunt after 12 people were killed in a mass shooting at an informal settlement in Johannesburg.

At least 10 suspects, heavily armed with rifles, entered the Jumpers Informal Settlement in the suburb of Cleveland late on Tuesday night and opened fire before fleeing in a white vehicle, police said.

The motive for what police called a "heartless" and "barbaric" attack, in which another nine people were injured, is still being investigated.

Members of the Jumper's community believe the shooting may be linked to a turf war between groups of illegal miners living in the area.

Illegal mining has been on

the increase in South Africa, which has one of the highest murder rates in the world.

Shootings in informal settlements are not uncommon, sometimes linked to gang violence and personal disputes.

The local police department said its officers responded to a "complaint of shooting in progress" at about 23:10 local time (21:10 GMT) on Tuesday.

"It is alleged that more than 10 suspects were dropped off by a white Toyota Quantum near a petrol station in Cleveland," the police said in a statement.

"The suspects allegedly entered the informal settlement through both entrances and moved through the area, opening fire on residents and community members at multiple

locations before fleeing the scene in the same vehicle," the statement added.

Police said eight men and three women died at the scene, while another man died from his injuries in hospital.

At least nine others were taken to various medical facilities for treatment of gunshot wounds.

The police have said that the motive for the attack is not known and forms part of the investigation.

During a visit to the scene on Wednesday, provincial police commissioner Lt Gen Tommy Mthombeni reiterated this stance, but added that investigators could not rule out a connection to illegal mining.

"As you know, this area is adjacent to the illegal mining area.

We are having those suspicions," he told reporters, calling the attack "heartless" and "barbaric".

Illegal mining is a lucrative, informal activity - with groups targeting disused gold mines and selling their finds on the black market.

The trade is often violent - earlier this year, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa deployed the military to some communities to help close down operations.

Last year, nine people were killed in a mass shooting at a tavern in Johannesburg.

There are about three million legally held firearms in South Africa and at least the same number of unlicensed weapons, according to statistics cited by Gideon Joubert from the South African Gunowners' Association.

## Three questions Bill Gates could face as he testifies to Congress on Epstein

Bill Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft and one of the world's most prominent philanthropists, is being questioned by a congressional committee about his past association with the late convicted sex offender, Jeffrey Epstein.

Gates, who has appeared voluntarily in Washington, said he welcomed the opportunity to answer questions about his relationship with the disgraced financier before the House Oversight Committee.

"I hope my testimony is helpful to the work - important work - of the committee to find justice for the victims," Gates told reporters as he walked into a hearing room, while avoiding further questions.

Epstein killed himself in a jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial. His long-time friend and associate, Ghislaine Maxwell, is serving a 20-year prison term for her part in his crimes.

Gates's connection to Epstein came to wider public attention after the US Department of Justice (DOJ) recently published more than three million pages of documents linked to the criminal investigation of Epstein. Gates's name appeared thousands of times.

He has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and rejected the idea that he knew anything about Epstein's illegal activity. But in a TV interview earlier this year, he did acknowledge he exercised poor judgement in meeting Epstein.

"I was foolish to spend time with him. I was one of many people who regret ever knowing him," he said.

Among the material released by the DOJ was a photograph that appears to show Gates near an aircraft with Epstein's pilot present. Gates has said he travelled with Epstein on a private jet - one of those facts that

have haunted many who have been tarnished by Epstein.

Other images show Gates posing with his arm around Epstein and a number of unidentified women.

Documents also include draft emails attributed to Epstein, containing a series of unverified and disputed claims about Gates's personal life. These include allegations that Epstein facilitated "illicit trysts" with "married women" for Gates, that the Microsoft co-founder had contracted a sexually-transmitted infection (STI) from what Epstein called "Russian girls", and that he had "helped Bill get drugs" to treat it.

A separate email alleged that Gates sought to "surreptitiously" give his then-wife Melinda antibiotics to protect her from the same infection. Gates strongly denies these claims but has admitted having had affairs with two Russian women.

## Pakistan launches deadly air strikes in Afghanistan, reigniting tensions

Pakistan has launched deadly air strikes along its border with Afghanistan, breaking months of relative calm in the restive region.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Wednesday that four targets had been destroyed in "calibrated strikes" that had killed 26 militants. Afghanistan's Taliban government earlier said 13

people, including 11 children, were killed in Pakistani strikes in three provinces.

Pakistan has long accused Afghanistan of harbouring terrorists who carry out attacks on Pakistani soil, a claim the Taliban government rejects.

The latest escalation is the first since February, when fighting at the border left hundreds dead.

The two countries had agreed a ceasefire last October following weeks of deadly clashes.

Pakistani Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the strikes were in response to "recent terrorist incidents in Pakistan" and that they targeted "hideouts and safe havens" on the border, including a training centre and an ammunition cache.

"Pakistan has always strived for maintaining peace and stability in the region, but at the same time the safety and security of our citizens remains our top priority," Tarar said.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said earlier that Pakistani strikes had hit targets in the provinces of Kunar, Khost and Paktika.

He said "11 children, one woman, and one elderly man were killed" in the strikes.



Launches deadly air strikes in Afghanistan



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# Sports

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

## NWFL Super Six MD3: Chioma leads charge as Edo Queens run over Abia Angels 6-2

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

It was harvest of goals for Edo Queens FC today at the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium in Port Harcourt as they outclassed Abia Angels of Aba with 6-2 scoreline in match day 3 of the ongoing Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Super 6 campaign

Chioma Moses the charge for



EDO QUEENS

### ● Enabulele congratulates team

the former league and WAFU-B champions the the Angels from Umuahia, scoring four goals in the encounter to help her side to secure the important three points with many goals advantage.

The new goal machine for Edo Queens Chioma opened scoring 3 minutes into the game. Their opponents however got an equal-

izer in the 11th minute through Abdurashed Mariam .

Chioma Moses got a brace in the 45th minute to put Edo Queens back in control shortly before the halftime break whistle.

On resumption of the second half, the Benin girls manager Moses Aduku reenergise his attack and effected tactical switch which paid off immediately as substitute Atume Doosur scored twice in quick succession to increase the goal tally in the 53rd and 56th minutes to make Edo Queens comfortable with 4-1 lead.

Goals thirsty Chioma Moses raced into the Abia Angels area again to blast home her third goal in the 72nd minute to get hat trick. She capitalized on the disorganized Abia rare again in the 83rd minute to score her 4th goal in the encounter.

Abia Angels however managed to pull one goal back in the 87th

minute through Blessing Saleh .

Edo Queens now have six points from three matches and they will be facing struggling host team Rivers Angels on Friday. Kickoff time is 3PM. Edo Queens crushed FC Robo Queens of Lagos 4-1 in their second match on Monday. They suffered a 1-0 defeat to Nasarawa Amazon in the opening match of the NWFL super six, putting the girls under pressure.

Abia Angels on the other hand have caused some upset in the tournament as they shockingly beat former Champions Rivers Angels 1-0 in their second match after holding another former champions Bayelsa Queens to a 1-1 draw on day one encounter. They have been the giant killers in the tournament but they couldn't find their Rythm against ruthless Edo Queens.

## Alex Oweifaleya signs 3-yrs contract extension with Bendel Insurance FC

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club have reached an agreement and secured a long term stay in Benin of one of their brightest young strikers Alex Oweifaleya, after the teenage striker signed a 3-year contract extension that will keep him at the club until 2029.

The 19-year-old forward earned the new deal following an impressive debut season in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL), with Bendel Insurance FC where he announced himself with 10 remarkable goals contribution.

The deal was sealed shortly before Insurance FC last fix-

ture of the 2025/26 NPFL with Remo Stars in Benin.

Oweifaleya's performances quickly made him fans and supporters favourite in Benin City, as he played a key role in the team's attacking setup, contributing to the steady recovery from the relegation zone before mid season.

The young striker joined Bendel Insurance from OYC Academy, Warri, Delta State last year and has since settled down to develop into a key figure in the Benin Arsenal's squad.

The new contract reflects the club's confidence in his potentials and ability to lead the Benin Arsenal's attack in the nearest future.



ALEX OWEIFALEYA WITH EDO SPORTS COMMISSION

## Lagos trains 150 teachers to drive Olympic values in schools

About 150 physical and health education teachers and games masters from public primary schools across Lagos State have begun a two-day training programme on Olympic values education.

The programme, organised by the Nigeria School Sport Federation (NSSF) and the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), is aimed at promoting excellence, respect and friendship among pupils.

The training began on Wednesday at the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (LASUBEB) Multipurpose Hall in Maryland, Lagos.

The initiative is supported by Olympic Solidarity and implemented in partnership with LASUBEB.

The programme introduces participants to the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP), which uses sport and education to foster positive character development.

Speaking at the event, NSSF President, Olabisi Joseph, said Lagos was the fifth state to host the programme after Plateau, Ogun, Bayelsa and Kano states.

Joseph urged participants to maximise the opportunity and apply the lessons in their classrooms and sporting activities.

"We want you to learn and unlearn so that you can adequately transfer these values to the children under your care," she said.

OVEP Coordinator, Kemi Obidahunsi, who represented NOC President, Habu Gumel,

said the programme was designed to nurture integrity, respect and holistic development among learners.

"OVEP is based on the Olympic philosophy that learning takes place through the balanced development of body and mind," she said.

According to her, the programme adopts the Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship, encouraging participants to apply them across all areas of life.

Lead facilitator, Prof. Clem-

ent Fasan, said the initiative would help teachers instil positive values while identifying and developing sporting talents at the grassroots level.

Fasan noted that schools remained critical platforms for discovering future athletes and shaping responsible citizens.

LASUBEB Executive Chair-



150 PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION TEACHERS AND GAMES

## 2026 Commonwealth Fencing: CFF President says Nigeria earned hosting right

The President of the Commonwealth Fencing Federation (CFF), Marie-France Dufour, says Nigeria secured the right to host the 2026 Commonwealth Fencing Championships after submitting a strong bid.

Dufour told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Wednesday that the championships would take place in Lagos from Aug. 9 to Aug. 19.



PRESIDENT CFF, MARIE-FRANCE DUFOUR (MIDDLE)

She said Commonwealth Sport entrusted the CFF with selecting the host nation, with Nigeria emerging successful after a thorough assessment of bids.

"The CFF has a strong relationship with Commonwealth Sport, which trusts our selection process.

"Nigeria's bid was chosen through this process and reflected the values of the Commonwealth," she said.

Dufour said the federation was confident in Nigeria's ability to stage a successful championship.

"Although this is the first Senior Commonwealth Fencing Championships to be held in Africa, we had a successful experience when South Africa hosted the Junior Championships in 2015.

"This gave us confidence that Nigeria can also deliver a successful event," she said.

According to her, the CFF Board carefully evaluated all submissions before selecting Nigeria.

"Nigeria's bid demonstrated its ability to meet our requirements. After reviewing the applications, the Board agreed that Nigeria's proposal was the strongest," she said.

Dufour expressed satisfaction with the growth of fencing across many Commonwealth nations, particularly in Africa.

## Fulham keen on Chukwueze stay, negotiate cut-price deal with AC Milan

Premier League side Fulham are reportedly interested in securing the services of Nigerian winger Samuel Chukwueze from AC Milan ahead of the new season.

Chukwueze, who spent the previous campaign on a season-long loan at Craven Cottage, impressed during his spell with Marco Silva's side, prompting Fulham to explore the possibility of making the move permanent.

However, the London club are

seeking to negotiate a reduced transfer fee with AC Milan.

Fulham are reluctant to activate the previously agreed £26 million purchase option and are instead aiming to reach an agreement for a lower amount.

The 27-year-old Super Eagles midfielder remains under contract with the Serie A giants, but Fulham's continued interest suggests they view him as an important part of their plans for the upcoming campaign. Super Eagles updates.



SAMUEL CHUKWUEZE

# As the 2026 World Cup begins today in America let's check the history, past winners

The FIFA World Cup is the premier international association football tournament, established in 1930 and holds every four years, except during World War II. Only eight nations have lifted the trophy in the tournament's history. The winners include Brazil (5), Germany (4), Italy (4), Argentina (3), France (2), Uruguay (2), England (1), and Spain (1).

It is an international association football competition among the senior men's national teams of the members of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the sport's global governing body.

The tournament has been held every four years since the inaugural tournament in 1930, with the exception of 1942 and 1946 due to World War II. The reigning champions are Argentina, who won their third title at the 2022 World Cup by defeating France.

Originally featuring 13 teams, the competition gradually expanded to 32 teams before being restructured for the 2026 tournament in the USA, Canada, and Mexico, expanding to 48 teams.

In its history, only teams from Europe and South America have reached the final. All-Time Winners List 1930: Uruguay 1934: Italy 1938: Italy 1950: Uruguay 1954: West Germany 1958: Brazil 1962: Brazil 1966: England 1970: Brazil 1974: West Germany 1978: Argentina 1982: Italy 1986: Argentina 1990: West Germany 1994: Brazil 1998: France 2002: Brazil 2006: Italy 2010: Spain 2014: Germany 2018: France 2022: Argentina

The contest starts with the qualification phase, which takes place over the preceding three years to determine which teams qualify for the tournament phase. In the tournament phase, 32 teams compete for the title at venues within the host nation(s) over the course of about a month.

The host nation(s) automatically qualify for the group stage of the tournament. The competition is scheduled to expand to 48 teams, starting with the 2026 World Cup.

As of the 2022 World Cup, 22 final tournaments have been held since the event's inception in 1930, and a total of 80 national teams have competed. The trophy has been won by eight national teams. With five wins, Brazil is the only team to have played in every tournament.

The other World Cup winners are Germany and Italy, with four titles each; Argentina, with three titles; France and inaugural winner Uruguay, each with two titles; and England and Spain, with one title each.

The World Cup is globally regarded as the most prestigious association football competition, as well as the most widely viewed and followed sporting event in the world.

The viewership of the 2018 World Cup was estimated to be 3.57 billion, close to half of the global population, while the engagement with the 2022 World Cup was estimated to be 5 billion, with about 1.5 billion people watching the final match.

Eighteen countries have hosted the World Cup, most recently Qatar, who hosted the 2022 event. The 2026 tournament will be jointly hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States, which will give Mexico the distinction of being the first country to host games in three World Cups.



The world's first international football match was a challenge match played in Glasgow in 1872 between Scotland and England. The first international tournament for nations, the inaugural British Home Championship, took place in 1884 and included games between England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

As football grew in popularity in other parts of the world at the start of the 20th century, it was held as a demonstration sport with no medals awarded at the 1900 and 1904 Summer Olympics; however, the International Olympic Committee has retroactively upgraded their status to official events, as well as the 1906 Intercalated Games.

After FIFA was founded in 1904, it tried to arrange an international football tournament between nations outside the Olympic framework in Switzerland in 1906. These were very early days for international football, and the official history of FIFA describes the competition as having been unsuccessful.

Team of Great Britain that won the Olympic tournament in 1908

At the 1908 Summer Olympics in London, football became an official Olympic sport. Planned by the Football Association (the FA), England's football governing body, the event was for amateur players only and was regarded suspiciously as a show rather than a competition. Great Britain (represented by the England national amateur football team) won the gold medals. They repeated the feat at the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm.

FIFA president Jules Rimet convinced the confederations to promote an international football tournament

Due to the success of the Olympic football tournaments, FIFA, with President Jules Rimet as the driving force, again started looking at staging its own international tournament outside of the Olympics. On 28 May 1928, the FIFA Congress in Amsterdam decided to stage a world championship. With Uruguay now two-time official football world champions and to celebrate their centenary of independence in 1930, FIFA named Uruguay as the host country of the inaugural World Cup tournament.

The national associations of selected nations were invited to send a team, but the choice of Uruguay as a venue for the competition meant a long and costly trip across the Atlantic Ocean for European sides, especially in the midst of the Great Depression.

As such, no European country pledged to send a team until two months before the start of the competition. Rimet eventually persuaded teams from Belgium, France, Romania, and Yugoslavia to make the trip. In total, 13 nations took part: seven from South America, four from Europe, and two from North America.

The first two World Cup matches took place simultaneously on 13 July 1930, and were won by France and the United States, who defeated Mexico 4–1 and Belgium 3–0 respectively. The first goal in World Cup history was scored by Lucien Laurent of France. In the final, Uruguay defeated Argentina 4–2 in front of 93,000 spectators in Montevideo, and became the first nation to win the World Cup. After the creation of the World Cup, FIFA and the IOC disagreed over the status of amateur players; football was dropped

from the 1932 Summer Olympics.

After the IOC and FIFA worked out their differences, Olympic football returned at the 1936 Summer Olympics, but was now overshadowed by the more prestigious World Cup.[24]

The issues facing the early World Cup tournaments were the difficulties of intercontinental travel and war. Few South American teams were willing to travel to Europe for the 1934 World Cup and all North and South American nations except Brazil and Cuba boycotted the 1938 tournament. Brazil was the only South American team to compete in both. The 1942 and 1946 competitions, which Germany and Brazil sought to host,[26] were cancelled due to World War II.[27]

The opening game of the Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, shortly before the 1950 FIFA World Cup

The 1950 World Cup, held in Brazil, was the first to include British football associations. Scotland, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland had withdrawn from FIFA in 1920, partly out of unwillingness to play against the countries they had been at war with, and partly as a protest against foreign influence on football. The teams rejoined in 1946 following FIFA's invitation. The tournament also saw the return of 1930 champions Uruguay, who had boycotted the previous two World Cups. Uruguay won the tournament again after defeating the host nation Brazil, in the match called "Maracanazo" (Portuguese: Maracanaço).

In the tournaments between 1934 and 1978, 16 teams competed in each tournament, except in 1938, when Austria was absorbed into Germany

after qualifying, leaving the tournament with 15 teams, and in 1950, when India, Scotland, and Turkey withdrew, leaving the tournament with 13 teams.

Most of the participating nations were from Europe and South America, with a small minority from North America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. These teams were usually defeated easily by the European and South American teams. Until 1982, the only teams from outside Europe and South America to advance out of the first round were: United States, semi-finalists in 1930; Cuba, quarter-finalists in 1938; North Korea, quarter-finalists in 1966; and Mexico, quarter-finalists in 1970.

The tournament was expanded to 24 teams in 1982, and then to 32 in 1998, allowing more teams from Africa, Asia and North America to take part. Since then, teams from these regions have enjoyed more success, with several having reached the quarter-finals: Mexico, quarter-finalists in 1986; Cameroon, quarter-finalists in 1990; South Korea, finishing in fourth place in 2002; Senegal, along with USA, both quarter-finalists in 2002; Ghana, quarter-finalists in 2010; Costa Rica, quarter-finalists in 2014; and Morocco, finishing in fourth place in 2022. European and South American teams continue to dominate, e.g., the quarter-finalists in 1994, 1998, 2006 and 2018 were all from Europe or South America and so were the finalists of all tournaments so far.

Two hundred teams entered the 2002 FIFA World Cup qualification rounds. 198 nations attempted to qualify for the 2006 FIFA World Cup. A record 204 countries entered qualification for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

In October 2013, Sepp Blatter spoke of guaranteeing the Caribbean Football Union's region a position in the World Cup.[35] In the edition of 25 October 2013 of the FIFA Weekly Blatter wrote that: "From a purely sporting perspective, I would like to see globalisation finally taken seriously, and the African and Asian national associations accorded the status they deserve at the FIFA World Cup. It cannot be that the European and South American confederations lay claim to the majority of the berths at the World Cup." Those two remarks suggested to commentators that Blatter could be putting himself forward for re-election to the FIFA Presidency.

In October 2016, FIFA president Gianni Infantino stated his support for a 48-team World Cup in 2026. On 10 January 2017, FIFA confirmed the 2026 World Cup will have 48 finalist teams.

## FIFA WORLD CUP PAST WINNERS (1930–2022)

YEAR	WINNER
1930	Uruguay
1934	Italy
1938	Italy
1950	Uruguay
1954	West Germany
1958	Brazil
1962	Brazil
1966	England
1970	Brazil
1974	West Germany
1978	Argentina
1982	Italy
1986	Argentina
1990	West Germany
1994	Brazil
1998	France



# SuperSport launches World Cup morning show

As the 2026 FIFA World Cup captures global attention, SuperSport, a subsidiary of MultiChoice Canal+, is set to transform morning television with the launch of The Morning Cup. SuperSport Senior Manager for Communications and Partnerships, Sibusiso Mjikeliso, announced the development in a statement released on Tuesday in Lagos. According to Mjikeliso, the programme will premiere on Thursday, delivering a daily live broadcast that blends football, culture, music, entertainment and lively conversation. He said the show would be hosted by SuperSport presenters

Lwazi Ziqubu and Fiso Mazibuko, supported by a diverse panel of pan-African co-hosts. "They will bring exceptional star power to the desk, including legendary South African television and radio personality Phat Joe. "Nigerian comedy star Bright Okpocha, popularly known as Basketmouth, award-winning Kenyan actress Sarah Hassan, and Egyptian-Jamaican sports presenter Sirayah Shiraz will also feature," Mjikeliso said. Phat Joe described his return to SuperSport as an exciting opportunity to be part of a unique continental project. "Any time SuperSport calls

you to do a show for a billion people, you answer. "But when it is a brand-new programme with a fresh format and a pan-African cast, it becomes something truly special. "I'm thrilled to be back on television. I never left TV; I simply took a strategic pause," he said. The Morning Cup is designed to give viewers a family-style experience, combining entertainment and football throughout the tournament. The programme will also offer multiple replay windows during the day, with on-demand access available on DStv Stream, GOtv and GOtv Stream. Ahead of the launch, the cast participated in a cross-continental radio campaign to introduce the show to audiences. Phat Joe appeared on Anele's breakfast programme on 947 in South Africa, while Basketmouth featured on Brila FM in Nigeria. Speaking about his fellow

presenters, Joe jokingly said the production team had assembled a colourful cast. He joked: "Chemistry? What chemistry? I think the producers made a mistake. I'm already asking them to recast some positions. "Sarah Hassan is a maths enthusiast. She studied actuarial science and will probably spend her time predicting our futures. "Basketmouth may try to revive his rap career for the umpteenth time. The only cast member I truly like is Sirayah. The producers needed someone to make me look taller." Award-winning Kenyan actress and former television host Sarah Hassan welcomed the opportunity to join the programme. "I am incredibly excited. It is a privilege to work alongside Joe and the wider pan-African team.



Position	Prize Pool
1 CHAMPIONS	\$50M
2 RUNNERS-UP	\$33M
3 3RD PLACE	\$29M
4 4TH PLACE	\$27M
5TH-8TH PLACE PER TEAM	\$19M EACH
9TH-16TH PLACE PER TEAM	\$15M EACH
17TH-32ND PLACE PER TEAM	\$11M EACH
33RD-48TH PLACE PER TEAM	\$9M EACH

RECORD \$655 MILLION PRIZE POOL

EVERY TEAM WILL EARN AT LEAST \$9 MILLION!

WHO WINS THE \$50M PRIZE IN 2026? COMMENT YOUR PICK!

### OLDEST GOALSCORERS AT FIFA WORLD CUPS

Rank	Name (Year)	Age
1	ROGER MILLA (1994)	42y 39d
2	PEPE (2022)	39y 283d
3	CRISTIANO RONALDO (2022)	37y 292d
4	G. GREN (1958)	37y 236d
5	C. BLANCO (2010)	37y 151d

42 YEARS OLD. STILL CHASING HISTORY!

WILL RONALDO SCORE IN WORLD CUP 2026? YES NO

## Jigawa skaters club seeks support to promote local competition

Some roller skating enthusiasts in Jigawa have called for the state government to support the development of the sporting event as it continues to gain ground among youths. They said skating is being used as a platform for youth engagement, discipline and positive social development. A cross section of the athletes said this in separate interviews with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), on Wednesday in Dutse. Skating, introduced in Dutse many years ago by an enthusiast from Kaduna State, has grown into an organised sporting event with structured training sessions and expanding participation across the state. Mr Naziru Adamu, Chairman, Jigawa Skaters Club, said he had been involved in the sport for about 15 years. He recalled that skating began when a visitor from Kaduna introduced it to interested youths, who sustained and expanded it into an organised network with branches across the 27 local government areas of the state. Adamu, who is also the

Coach of the Dutse Skaters Club, said participation has continued to rise, particularly among young people. "Our team manager has introduced his children into the sport, and they are now doing very well," he said. He said the group operated under strict safety rules and did not allow reckless skating on public roads. "We train every Saturday and Sunday at designated grounds. Whenever we go out for events, everyone must wear reflective jackets and helmets," he said. The chairman said members always skated in organised formations and adhered strictly to safety standards. Adamu said the sport has helped promote unity and reduce youth restiveness by providing a structured recreational outlet. He said skating activities include high jump, long jump and marathon categories. The skaters, he said, sought for government support in the areas of training facilities, equipment and sponsorship to enable them develop talents and compete at national level.

## Cricket: YellowGreens crush Malawi for first Kwibuka T20 victory

Nigeria's Female YellowGreens on Wednesday recorded their first victory at the 2026 Kwibuka T20 Tournament, defeating Malawi Women by 52 runs in Kigali, Rwanda. The Group stage encounter was played at the Gahanga 2 Cricket Oval. After being put in to bat by Malawi, Nigeria posted 98 for eight in their allotted 20 overs before dismissing their opponents for 46.

The comprehensive victory provided a timely boost for the YellowGreens after a challenging start to their campaign at the tournament. Nigeria's innings was anchored by Jessica Bieni, who remained unbeaten on 25 runs to guide the side through difficult phases. Sarah Etim added 14 runs, while captain Favour Eseigbe and Christabel Chukwuonye contributed 11 runs apiece.

The contributions helped Nigeria recover from early setbacks and compile a competitive total on a pitch that offered assistance to bowlers. Malawi's Lucky Malino delivered an impressive spell, claiming four wickets and keeping the Nigerian batters under pressure throughout the innings. In spite of Malino's efforts, Nigeria's lower order displayed resilience and determination to ensure the team approached a

three-figure total. Chasing 99 for victory, Malawi struggled against a disciplined Nigerian bowling attack that maintained pressure from the opening over. The Malawian batting lineup never settled, losing wickets regularly as Nigeria tightened its grip on the contest. Nigeria eventually bowled out Malawi for 46 in just 10.3 overs to complete an emphatic victory.

## NWFL Super Six: FC Robo Queens end Nasarawa Amazons' perfect run with impressive 2-0 victory

FC Robo Queens breathed new life into their NWFL Premiership Super 6 campaign yesterday afternoon with a deserved 2-0 victory over table toppers Nasarawa Amazons at the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium. After suffering back to back defeats in their opening two matches, many had written off the

Lagos side's chances of making any meaningful impact in Port Harcourt. However, the Lagos Landladies responded in style, producing one of their most impressive performances of the season to hand Nasarawa Amazons their first defeat of the competition. Goals from Opeyemi Ajakaye and Kemi Adegbuyi in a five-minute second-half spell secured a

memorable victory that not only revived FC Robo Queens' hopes but also threw the NWFL Super 6 title race wide open. For Nasarawa Amazons, the defeat ended their perfect start after victories over Edo Queens and Bayelsa Queens had placed them firmly in control of the standings. The 2-0 defeat of Nasara-

wa Amazons means they have been overtaken by Edo Queens on the table. Edo Queens now top the chat with same six points with Nasarawa Amazons but have superior goals. Edo Queens lead with six points and seven goals plus white Nasarawa Amazons are placed second with six points goals canceled.

